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VALENTINE'S EVE.

BY

MRS. OPIE.

VALUABLE & RARE

MRS. W. H. RILEY

VALUABLE & RARE

THREE VOLUMES  
AND ONE

1870

1871

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1871

# VALENTINE'S EVE.

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MRS. OPIE.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

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VOL. II.

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London:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,  
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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1816.

# VALENTINE'S

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*Printed by Richard and Arthur Tayler, Shoe-Lane, London.*

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# VALENTINE'S EVE.



## CHAPTER I.

**L**ORD SHIRLEY was right in his expectations of what would be the result of Catherine's introduction into the world. —The general's door was immediately besieged with visitors, and the tables covered with cards of invitation.

“I should like better to return into the country, sir,” said Catherine, “than to remain in London, and run this giddy round; especially so soon after my loss.”

But the general had now tasted the delight of seeing her an object of public admiration, and he could not at present bear to deny himself that pleasure. Still,

however, Catherine persisted in urging her request ; and at length the general promised that, if she would only allow him to conduct her once or twice to the Opera and to both theatres, he would consent to defer her visits to all the world till the next season.

“ But we can easily come from the country to these places, sir,” said Catherine ; “ and when there, we are quite near enough to see frequently those friends, those true friends, who think us worth driving a few miles to see.”

“ True, very true,” replied the general ; “ and you shall have it your own way.”

But Mrs. Baynton was not as complaisant ; and she told the general that he and his idol might go by themselves,—a plan too pleasant to them to be objected to for one moment.

Lord Shirley heard of their intended  
plans

plans with mixed feelings. He would have wished to have been the chosen of Catherine's heart, though she was exposed to the attractions and attentions of other men ; and he did not like to owe her acceptance of him rather to her having had no power of choice than to a preference of him. But then on the other hand, his success was made surer by her returning into comparative retirement, a retirement to which he alone had unrestricted admittance. Besides, he felt that to have seen her constantly exposed to the attentions of Melvyn would have given him almost insupportable agony : therefore, on the whole, he rejoiced that they again quitted New Street.

In the meanwhile the world gave Catherine to the earl ; while the general heard this report with wonder that it was not true ; and the more so, because he was

sure that the earl was in love with Catherine.

At length he could keep silence no longer ; but taking Lord Shirley into his own study, he said, " I can't endure the suspense to which you doom me, Lionel ; for in your heart I see that you adore my grand-daughter, and yet you suffer her to remain in total ignorance of your attachment and views."

" My dear general, how can I disclose them, when I am convinced that she has no other regard for me than she thinks due to an attached relation ?"

" And pray, my lord, what other regard would you have Miss Shirley allow herself to feel for you, as you never even hinted to her that you wished to engage her affections ?"

" Oh ! but my eyes must have told her."

" Your eyes ! She never looks at them  
long



long enough to understand them ; for, except when she gave her delicate aunt such offence by praising your blushes, her modest eye is usually withdrawn from the face of every man, as soon she has once testified her respect and attention by lifting it up."

"True, very true, general : however, I am sure that if I were to make proposals to her she would reject them."

"And your pride cannot bear the idea of being refused ! Well, Lionel, it is then certain you are not thoroughly and completely in love : when you are, affection will conquer self-love, and you will run all risks.—And yet I can't help laughing at your fears ; for are you, do you think, a man to be refused ?"

"I am afraid that I used to think not," replied Lord Shirley ; "but my preposterous vanity is now humbled enough, and I fear that I shall be rejected by the only  
woman

woman whose rejection is capable of giving me pain."

"Very humble and very pretty," said the general; "and if Catherine were here, she would quote some appropriate text, I dare say."

"Oh! by the by, that reminds me," returned the earl, "that I wish you would give her a hint to be on her guard in that respect when she is in society, and not appear to be more serious in her ideas of religious duties than others; as I find that Mrs. Baynton has prepared the circles she will move in to find her a sort of enthusiast, and she will incur the danger of being called Saint Shirley."

"Well," coolly replied the general, "that is better than being called Sinner Shirley."

"But, my dear sir, with the generality of the world they mean the same thing; and true piety like Miss Shirley's, firm faith regulating

regulating every movement of her heart and every word of her tongue, is so rare a thing, that no one believes in its existence; and as we none of us like to admit superiority in any thing, our dear relation will be deemed by most people either hypocritical or insane."

"My lord," replied the general, "you and I may be governed by what the world says, and, tempted by its dread sneer, may be influenced to seem even less virtuous and religious than we are;—but do you suppose that Miss Shirley will? The being who lives in this world considering it only as a passport to another, cannot condescend, I may say, though *she* would not use the term, to be deterred from an avowal of her religious feelings by the dread of the scorner. But I will tell her what you say."

"Tell her what I say? O no! she will resent my presumption."

"No,

“No, no ; Catherine, I am sure, will overlook your presumption in consideration of your motives.—But here she is coming in from the garden, I will call her in ; and remember, Lionel, true love never is withheld by any personal fear from considering the good of its object.”

The general immediately beckoned her in ; and she entered extending her hand with a smile of great cordiality to her embarrassed admirer.

“Catherine,” said the general, “here is your noble cousin in a state of great perplexity on your account.”

“Indeed !” said Catherine blushing.

“Yes : he is afraid, from his knowledge of the world,—a world not worthy either of your purity or your piety,—that, if you do not keep your piety more out of sight, you will be called Saint Shirley ; and I beg leave to add, that the interests  
of

of religion always suffer by any thing that serves to render its professors ridiculous."

"If being *nicknamed*, however unworthy I know myself to be of so holy a name, were all I had to apprehend from language which I have only recently learnt to be peculiar, I should not, much as I respect Lord Shirley's opinion, be inclined to alter it. But I feel with you, that the cause of religion itself suffers by any eccentricity, however harmless, in the conduct or manners of its professors. And if I must associate with the world, I see that I must, in trifles at least, not go counter to its ideas.—Yes, you are both right, my dear lord, and I sincerely thank you, grandfather; assuring you at the same time that I will endeavour to reform."

"Would, on the contrary, you could reform others, and make them like you!" replied the earl.

“I should think it presumptuous for me to attempt it, or even to believe it advisable. No : all I can do I will, and that is, not run any risk of bringing religion itself into contempt by exposing it in my person to scorn. No, Lord Shirley ; no : I will not ‘ sing the Lord’s song in a strange land.’ Do forgive me this one quotation, and in future act as the representative of this terrible world, that loves not to hear of things that are holy, except once a week from the pulpit of a fashionable preacher.”

“ But how can I represent that world with whose feelings and opinions I have, on this occasion, nothing in common ? ”

“ Except,” said Catherine smiling, “ its love of appearances and conformity to established customs. But I admire your candour and your friendly boldness in speaking this opinion at the risk of displeasing me. O Lord Shirley ! dear Lord Shirley !

Shirley! surely you were intended for something better than to be a man of the world!"

Lord Shirley was too much and too pleasantly moved by these words to articulate an answer; he only pressed her hand respectfully to his lips. "Yes," thought he to himself, "I think I am intended for something better, and I hope I was intended to be the husband of you, excelling creature!" But an unaccountable, or rather a love-like timidity still restrained the avowal of his feelings.

Catherine's first appearance after the birth-day was at the Opera on the Saturday night, whither she accompanied the Duchess of C——; and great was the surprise, real or affected, of the misses who beheld her, not to see her (now she was not obliged to appear in a certain costume as at court) dressed in pale pink, and her fine dark hair wreathed with  
Maltese

Maltese roses ; as Mrs. Baynton's representations had led them to expect to see her in the simple and peculiar dress of a Moravian or a Methodist.

Lord Shirley was prevented reaching the Opera-house till late, and had the mortification to find Melvyn standing behind Catherine's chair, and laying close siege to her attention, if not to her heart. He had dared to tell her not only that the report of her engagement to Lord Shirley was universally credited, but how many heart-aches it had occasioned ; and Catherine was only just recovering from the embarrassment which this information gave her, when Lord Shirley entered the box. It was therefore impossible for her to receive him with her usual ease and cordiality, and she spoke to him with a degree of coldness which shocked his feelings and called forth his jealousy ; for his engaging rival was conversing with her !  
and



and wholly unable to contain his sensations, he replied to Melvyn's courteous bow by an almost disdainful defiance; and nearly turning his back on Catherine, began conversing with the duchess.

"I see how it is—I see I was not misinformed," said Melvyn with a deep sigh; "he has all the airs of a successful lover already. Alas! I know my duty, and shall perform it—Good night."

Melvyn was disappointed: he expected that Catherine, in all the haughty consciousness of power and beauty, would have so far resented Lord Shirley's evident discomposure by pressing him to keep his seat: but he knew not that pride and resentment were the slaves of Catherine, not her masters; and that, attributing Lord Shirley's anger at seeing Melvyn by her side to his kind resentment of her imagined wrongs, she was little inclined to punish him for a feeling that she respected;

spected; and she was in reality very glad when Melvyn got up to go away.—She therefore returned his “Good-night” far more cordially than he uttered it.

As soon as he was gone, Lord Shirley turned round almost involuntarily to see how Catherine bore his departure, and how she was disposed to regard him; and to his agreeable surprise he saw her look on him with so sweet yet arch a smile, that almost without knowing it he found himself seated in the chair behind her.

“I suppose you are glad he is gone?” said she in a low voice.

“I am, indeed; but you are not.”

“Oh, yes! I am—the moment you came in, I wished him gone.”

“Indeed! why so?”

“Because I felt it uncomfortable to converse with a man, in your presence, whom you consider as having regarded me in a degrading point of view. Not but

but that I am sure you wrong him; else I should not be so civil to him. He is very agreeable; especially to me, for he knew my mother—that is, he has met her in company, and heard her sing. How I wish, Lord Shirley, you had known my mother!”

There was so much to please and so much to displease the earl in this speech, that he did not know how to reply to it. At last, however, he said, “Would I had known your mother! and still more do I wish it, since I find being able to talk of her has the power to make a man agreeable to you.”

Catherine turned round with a look of marked surprise, and could hardly help interpreting her look into these words, “Is it possible you can believe I think Mr. Melvyn more agreeable than you?” But she remained silent; and Lord Shirley, gathering some hope from the look she

she had given him, became as pleasant as usual.

Catherine leaned over the box some time absorbed in profound attention to the music; and having, as she retired again, observed several faces and glasses in the pit looking upwards, she asked the duchess what it was that engaged the attention of the audience, and drew it from the stage. The duchess looked at Lord Shirley, and smiled sarcastically before she replied.—“I beg your grace to answer the question as you choose,” said Lord Shirley in reply to the smile.

“They are looking, Miss Shirley, at a new planet that has been lately discovered, and is now visible to the naked eye.”

“Impossible! madam—how can it be seen from that spot?—You must be trying to impose on my credulity.”

The duchess looked again incredulously at Lord Shirley,—“It is real, not pretended,

tended, indeed, duchess," said the earl, again answering her look.

"What is real?" cried Catherine.

"Your ignorance," replied the duchess.

"For my own part, my dear," she added in a kind tone, "I have been so used to all the affectations and pretences of beauties and would-be beauties, and coquettes and prudes, that I own to you I have little faith in the semblance of modesty, and am more inclined to believe a woman hypocritical than humble. But Lord Shirley, who knows you better than I do, assures me you are honest, and that you are not pretending, but feeling ignorance and unconsciousness at this moment."

"I never at this, or at any other moment, madam," replied Catherine coolly but proudly, "say any thing that is not true; and I am wholly at a loss to know what your grace means."

"Then

“Then I will explain :—The good people below,—aye, and all round the house I believe,—are looking at a new planet, first discovered in the Shirley family. Do you understand me now?”

“To be sure I do,” said Catherine drawing back, and dyed with blushes such as no art could imitate, no hypocrisy feign.

“I am quite convinced now, Shirley,” said the duchess laughing : “but indeed, Miss Shirley, if you retire from admiration so pointedly, I shall think you affected in one way.”

“Perhaps,” replied Catherine thoughtfully, “it will be more proper and delicate not to seem to notice it ; but it is very natural that they should look at me, because I am a new face, and with something of the romantic attached to my story, and also on my poor father’s account.”

She then resumed her station in front ;  
and

and the duchess looked at Lord Shirley again, but with a different expression, and one most truly gratifying to his feelings: for the duchess was worthy to know, and capable of appreciating Catherine's character when once known; though, as is sometimes the case, she had, like others, been prejudiced against her by the representations of her own family.

“It is remarkable to me,” said Catherine in a very low voice to the duchess, “that many who talk offensively loud during the music, should be silent as the grave when the dancing is going forward; and that women sit absorbed in motionless attention, when, really, one would think they would be glad to turn their heads away.”

“O thou poor novice!” replied the duchess smiling—“But such is the power of habit, that I doubt not by this time twelvemonth you will see nothing indecent

cent in the dancing, and will very likely talk during the Opera."

"The latter, my love of music will always forbid: and if it be really in the power of habit to conquer my sense of decency, I will not frequent the Opera—I will not give habit an opportunity of so operating upon me;—for, if once a woman allows any thing to deprive her of her nice sense of propriety, tell me if you can whither her degradation may not in time extend."

"Oh! now the true nature peeps out," replied the duchess smiling: "I was told you were a methodist preacher in petticoats, and I am very glad you have favoured me with a specimen of your art. But pray do not preach to me; for, if you do, you will certainly convert me: for the little I have yet seen of you has inclined me already to believe that all you do and feel is 'wisest, virtuouslest, discreetest, best.'"

"With



“ With the hope of converting your grace before my eyes, can you possibly imagine I shall obey the prohibition, and cease preaching ?” said Catherine laughing.

Lord Shirley, who had gone to the opposite side of the house, now returned; and telling the ladies, if they wished to get into the room without being painfully squeezed, they had better go directly and before the curtain fell, he offered an arm to each; and just before the crowd began to assemble he went in search of the carriage: but the ladies soon found their situation a most unpleasant one. The beauty and novelty of Catherine soon made her the universal attraction; and the duchess and herself were so painfully pressed upon that they were glad to accept the offered protection of Melvyn, who with some difficulty kept the crowd a little off them.

“ But where is the happy Shirley ?”  
said

said Melvyn : “ why has he deserted his charge?”

“ Lord Shirley is gone to see for the carriage.”

“ And when he returns must I resign you to him, madam? or are you not too much aware how flattering to him, and how full of confirmation to the report of the world, his leading you to the carriage would be, to venture so decided a step?”

“ Sir, Lord Shirley, in the absence of my grandfather, who was too unwell to accompany me, is my natural protector, because he is my nearest relation ; and when he comes I shall certainly claim that protection.”

“ It is very strange he should have withheld it when it was so much needed. —But here he is.”

However, though in sight, Lord Shirley did not come near them ; but, giving his arm to a very beautiful woman,  
returned

returned again, as if going to see her to her carriage.

“Cool enough, that!” muttered Melvyn; “but I suppose she insisted upon it. Well, Miss Shirley, the world will now conclude Lord Shirley is secure of you, by this public neglect.”

“Neglect, sir! neglect! I cannot see his conduct in the light you do, nor should I approve of Lord Shirley’s being rude to another woman in order to attend on me: no doubt the lady he is protecting has claims on him.”

“No doubt,” returned Melvyn sarcastically.

The duchess was during this conversation talking to a lady near her; but now turning round, she expressed her surprise that Lord Shirley was not come back.

“He is gone,” said Melvyn with a significant smile, “to see Miss Clermont to her carriage.”

“Oh!

“ Oh ! that,” she replied, “ is a piece of civility which he could not avoid.” On which she beckoned the duke her husband, who succeeded in making his way up to her before Lord Shirley did—“ Here, duke,” said she, “ do you take Miss Shirley under your protection, while I take Mr. Melvyn’s arm; and then let us go and meet Shirley, who has been to get up the carriage.”

This arrangement dissipated the angry gloom which was gathering on Lord Shirley’s brow, from apprehension lest Catherine should take the arm of Melvyn; and as the duke conclusively resigned her to his care as soon as he reached them, the earl composed his troubled features, and even wished Melvyn good-night in a kind tone when they parted at the door of the Opera.

“ I wonder who Miss Clermont is, and  
what

what her claims on Lord Shirley can be," thought Catherine when she retired for the night : " she is very beautiful, and it is no wonder he saw her to her carriage." But Catherine could not forget the expression of Melvyn's countenance when he mentioned her ; and Catherine certainly did not go to sleep that night as soon as usual. Still, she was not at all aware that she was on the point of feeling more interest in Lord Shirley than her sense of propriety would have allowed her to feel ; for, as yet, the preference was not decided enough to deserve the name of a *partiality*.

The next morning, as soon as decorum warranted, Lord Shirley was in New Street, and he lost no time in talking of the Opera of the night before, while the general listened to his description of the admiration which Catherine had excited.

" I wish I had been there to have wit-

nessed it!" he exclaimed—"My dear Lionel, how you must have enjoyed your evening!"

"I cannot say so, sir, for Melvyn was talking in Miss Shirley's ear when I entered the box; and had not the duchess taken his arm, he would have handed her to the carriage I believe."

"Why, where were you then?"

"I was gone to call up the coach," replied Lord Shirley blushing. "But, sir, is it not clear that, if Miss Shirley did not like him, she would not allow him to speak to her, and attend her in the way he does? for, would she not remember with pain his former presumption? True, she thinks his views were honourable; but were she not partial to him, would she not in this instance be governed by the opinion of others?"

"I own there is something in what you say; and as it is most likely Melvyn will

will be as eager to obtain the hand of my heiress, as the heart of an obscure girl, she must be inclined to *encourage* his addresses, or she would pointedly discourage him ; for no doubt he makes a sort of love to her, and has sufficient pretensions to address her."

" I do not doubt," cried Lord Shirley, pacing the room in agony, " but that he does approach her as a lover."

" But I will know beyond a doubt," replied the general ; " for I will ask her the question." He said no more ; for Catherine entered the room, and blushed when she saw Lord Shirley.

" So, Catherine," cried the general, " I find Melvyn was your beau last night?"

" O fye ! Lord Shirley," said Catherine, " I see you have been telling tales : but I will be even with you. My dear

sir, if Mr. Melvyn had not stepped in to our assistance, the duchess and I might have been squeezed to death in the crowd, —a danger wholly incurred by Lord Shirley's desertion of us."

"How! did I not go to see for the servants?"

"Yes, but you need not have staid away so long. Was it absolutely necessary for you to hand Miss Clermont to her carriage, when you were the promised beau of the Duchess of C—— and myself?"

"And *did* he do this?"

"O, yes; he did."

"Upon my word, Lionel," cried the general laughing, "you are a sly fellow, and did not tell tales of *yourself* certainly. Well, I think Melvyn was very right in filling the place you had abandoned. Poor Sophy Clermont! it was kind in you indeed!"

Lord



Lord Shirley looked foolish, and only uttered "Nonsense, stuff!"

"But, my dear," said the general gravely, "the wonder is, not that Melvyn should wish to pay you attention, but that you should *suffer* his attentions, as he must, I conclude, be all but a declared lover. Therefore, unless you mean to accept him, you should keep him at a distance."

"Is it possible, sir," cried Catherine, "that you can suppose me likely to allow Mr. Melvyn to converse with me, if he were in any degree approaching the character of a lover?—No, sir: it is because he has no such pretensions, that I think it right to treat him with the civility due to every gentleman."

"No such pretensions, Catherine!"

"None. He has candidly told me that when he followed me in the street, and behaved so absurdly, he hoped to prevail  
on

on me to listen to his honourable and disinterested addresses, for he then thought me his inferior. But the severity with which Mrs. Merle treated him, and I regarded him, convinced him his suit would be hopeless ; and when he was so firmly forbidden (here Catherine blushed, and hesitated in her speech,) never to walk before the house again, he was resolved to conquer a regard that promised only to make him miserable ; and he *did* conquer it."

"Does he say so?" asked Lord Shirley.

"Well," said the general, "I do not see, after so frank and honourable an avowal, and so complete an exculpation, how Catherine as a delicate woman can refuse to listen to him. Indeed, if she did not, it would seem as if she was piqued at his not renewing his addresses."

"So *I* think," observed Catherine.

"I wish

“I wish I thought so too,” said Lord Shirley sighing; “but I dare say I ought to think so, and that I alone am to blame—so let us call another subject. You return to Hampton tomorrow, I think, and mean to come back again on Friday to go to Vauxhall, if the weather be fine?”

“We do, my lord; and Lucy Merle goes back with us also.”

“Indeed! Lucy Merle going back with them!” said Lord Shirley to himself as he returned home: “I wonder how *she* likes Melvyn! I hope she understood, and consequently resents, his former behaviour; for I am well convinced he is, and means to be, Catherine Shirley’s lover, though he disavows his intention: and probably he hopes, by throwing her off her guard, to steal into her affections. Yes, yes, it is so, I see very clearly. Had I not then better try my own fortune with her first? No—I dare not.” And while he experienced

enced thus all the doubts and fears and miseries incident to love, he could not help exclaiming "O poor Sophia! thou art indeed well revenged!"

The next day the general and Catherine returned to Hampton, and the day after Lord Shirley went thither also.

"Now, then, for a few more rational evenings!" cried Catherine when she saw him. "Oh, how superior is the life we shall lead to a London life!"

"But after being used to the incense of general admiration, how can you be satisfied with that of one poor beau, and that one a relation too?"

"My lord," said Catherine gravely, "perfumes are fine things; yet some people cannot bear them, and, finding them pernicious, therefore avoid them. Admiration has the same effect on me. I own it is a very delightful thing, but certainly very unwholesome; therefore I wish

to

to remove from its baneful influence before it injures the health of my mind. Your approbation (I will not call it admiration) has a contrary effect, and is salutary to me, because it is founded, I flatter myself, on better grounds than mere personal appearance, and therefore excites me to persevere in that conduct which first called it forth."

Lord Shirley was nearly betrayed, by the blushing emotion with which Catherine spoke, into an open avowal of his sentiments : but the entrance of young Dormer, and the pleased surprise with which she received and welcomed him, not only prevented his declaration, but also led him to rejoice that he had not made it.

## CHAPTER II.

FRIDAY at length came, the evening fixed upon for their party to Vauxhall; and it was settled that Lord Shirley should escort Mrs. Baynton to Hampton to dinner, as her dislike to appear where her niece was to be seen, and in company with a Lucy Merle, was conquered by the wish of exhibiting her still fine figure at Vauxhall, the scene of her former triumphs, and a place peculiarly adapted, by the position of the lights, to heighten beauties, and throw defects into shade. In short, Mrs. Baynton believed it was the only place where she could have any chance for rivalling her great-niece, and her maid had often assured her that at Vauxhall she did not look above five-and-twenty. Mr. Dormer was to be their  
other

other beau : but when it was too late to get other attendants, Dormer sent word he was too ill to wait on them ; and Mrs. Baynton brought a note from the earl, saying he had just received a command to dine at C——n H——e ; but as the P——e was, he found, going to an early party, he had no doubt he could join them at Vauxhall by eleven.

It would certainly have been a better plan to have given up the party entirely till another time : but the evening was so fine, and Lucy Merle was so desirous of going, that Catherine encouraged the general's resolution of venturing thither without any other gentleman ; and her aunt, in putting on her new hat and mantle for the occasion, had found them so becoming, that she too was unwilling to defer any longer her hour of expected admiration. They therefore ordered the carriage, and reached Vauxhall by half  
past

past ten. As they went along, Catherine described Vauxhall as living in her memory, the evening when she first saw it, like a bright vision—a something unreal though distinct, and as unlike a common every-day scene, as the brilliant hues of an evening sky are unlike a ploughed field. “But the second time I was there,” she added, “was only five years ago; and beautiful as it was, no doubt, when crowded as I first saw it, it impressed my imagination more strongly the last time.” Here she paused; for emotion checked her voice.

“And why so, my dear?” asked the general.

“Because it was a rainy and tempestuous evening; and the gardens were a desert, but a splendid one; and as we paced along the glittering walks in utter solitude, we seemed the possessors of this magic land.”

“It



“It is Aladdin’s garden,” cried my mother, “and that happy child bounding before us, and gazing delighted on all she sees, is like Aladdin himself. But still it is a desert, though a magnificent one,” added my mother.

“It is no desert to me, as you are with me,” replied my father tenderly; “and I remember, as he said this, the wish that swelled my young heart.”

“Name it, child!” said the general solemnly, in a voice hoarse and almost inarticulate with emotion; “for, at the moment of such recollections as these, you must know your wishes are sacred.”

“O dear grand-father, you could not if you would fulfil my wish. It was, that if I married I might have such a husband as my father.”

“True, child—I can’t realize this wish, but I trust there are others who can.—But go on, tell me more of this evening.”

“No :

“No : I desire, Miss Shirley, that you will not,” cried her aunt : “it is very hard on my brother, that when he is trying to give you pleasure, you should always endeavour to give him pain.” How can you suppose recollections of what your father and mother said, especially descriptions of their fond fits, can give him aught but uneasiness?”

“My dear,” said the general, while Catherine, almost self-condemned, listened in consternation, “I am the best judge of my own feelings, and I desire you to go on.”

“I have little more to say, except that I was much interested in observing the rivalry between art and nature ; for with the artificial light of the fire-works mingled the blue and red flashes of the lightning, while the whizzing of the rockets, as they played upon the deep black clouds above us, was drowned in the solemn tones of  
the

the rolling thunder. The heavy rains at length converted the open part of the ground into a piece of water, which reflected every object on it, and doubled the sparkling edifices on its bosom.—‘Every moment adds to the beauty of this enchanted scene,’ said my mother; ‘but come, let us go into the unfrequented walks. I fancy myself a queen and you a king there, and as if all these things were created for us alone.’ ‘I did not think you had been so ambitious, or that the dream of ambition had had such charms for you,’ said my father. ‘I never was ambitious but for your sake,’ she replied; ‘and were this fancied empire mine, I should prize it only that I might give it to you.’”

“A truce with this stuff, I beg, Miss Catherine,” exclaimed her aunt: “really this fulsome fondness in old-married people

ple was bad enough originally, but is odious second hand, and I can't bear it."

"Nor I any longer, for better reasons," observed the general. "It awakes compunction in *me* even to madness; for, had *I* been a father, this sweet and holy union, as I call it, would perhaps have existed still."

"It was the will of Heaven," said Catherine solemnly and fervently, "to dissolve it here, and even regret is consequently forbidden us; but I believe it was in order to cement it eternally."

Silence, entire silence, succeeded; or rather silence interrupted merely by Mrs. Baynton's angry and indistinct broken murmurs of "makes me sick," "pompous piety," "affected sanctity," "no feeling."

But at length they reached the place of their destination; and when they entered  
the

the garden, the general took Catherine under his arm. Then turning round, he said in a voice that spoke he would be obeyed, "Sister, do you protect Miss Merle!"

"I, brother! and who is to protect me?" she replied; walking on.

"Protect you! Nonsense!" cried the general with a look of such comic and arch contempt, that Lucy could scarcely help laughing while she offered Mrs. Baynton her arm. But she rejected contact so unworthy the noble blood of a Shirley, and walked along wholly disregarding her. Lucy however kept close to her, as she was really rendered uncomfortable by the attention which she excited; and Mrs. Baynton soon found Lucy was not only a most odious companion to her, because she was a mere nobody, but a powerful rival.

While they were close behind the general and Catherine, and seemed to belong to them,

them, there was no danger of Lucy Merle's being improperly accosted ; but when forced by the crowd to a little distance from them, different groups of men walked alongside of, or followed her, and were lavish and loud in commendations of her beauty ; while the terrified girl clung to Mrs. Baynton's arm in spite of her resistance, and could hardly forbear seizing the arm of the general.—Still, however imperfectly and reluctantly Mrs. Baynton did the office of chaperone, her lofty and majestic height, her commanding carriage, and her cross countenance, served in some measure to protect her companion from insults. But nothing can awe a drunken man ; and at length a youth elevated by wine came up to Lucy and begged her to take his arm, and leave that old Sibyl to whom she was clinging.

An appeal to the general was now unavoidable. But just as she was springing for-

forward to make it, while Melvyn's agreeable conversation had so wholly engrossed Catherine and him, that they had forgotten who followed them, Lucy felt her arm seized and forcibly disengaged from her assailant; and looking up, beheld Lord Shirley, who fiercely commanded her tormentor to disappear directly. The drunken man is usually valiant; but as the one in question recognised the earl immediately, he thought it advisable to obey; and Lucy hung trembling on the arm he gave her, while he offered the other to Mrs. Baynton.

Impatience and more wine than he commonly drank had flushed Lord Shirley's face with even brighter hues than usual, and given his eyes additional lustre; but a look of anger altered their wonted expression, when he saw Melvyn by the side of Catherine, and beheld how completely

completely her attention and that of the general were absorbed in what he was saying.

“Has Melvyn been with them the whole evening?”

“Almost,” said Mrs. Baynton. “It is very strange, I think, that my brother should suffer such a flirtation.”

Lucy, not hearing what she had said, observed in a low voice to Lord Shirley, “It is very odd Miss Shirley can bear to converse with that man.”

“Then he has not the happiness of pleasing you, Miss Merle?”

“No, indeed!—I cannot tell why, but I do not like his countenance; it is not ingenuous, I think.”

When she said this, Lord Shirley felt so favourably inclined towards her, that he turned round to look at her, and was really astonished into temporary silence by



by her beauty. Her height, her high colour, the brilliancy of her eyes, the spirit of her countenance, and her black hair, which, though it curled naturally, was cut close to her head, and showed the turn of the latter, and of her long and finely formed throat,—all together made her an object too striking and too lovely to be passed unnoticed ; and he no longer wondered that she was, while unprotected, exposed to impertinent admirers.

“ Yes, yes ; I remember now you are a physiognomist,” said he kindly ; “ and I am afraid of you myself : therefore I beg you not to look at me with those formidable eyes.”

“ You, my lord,” said Lucy warmly, “ have nothing to fear from any physiognomist however skilful.”

“ I thank you,” said Lord Shirley bowing and laughing, while a blush of pleasure kindled on his cheek—“ I thank  
you

you in the name of the privileged orders, for this great concession in favour of one of their body."

Mrs. Baynton had during this time been endeavouring to call the attention of the general and Catherine, and inform them that Lord Shirley was arrived,—but in vain; as the earl, piqued at finding that they were not looking for him, insisted on it that his arrival should not be announced to them. But at this moment he heard Catherine say, as she stopped to adjust some part of her dress, "I cannot think where Lord Shirley is! I am afraid he will not come at all!" Then turning to speak to Lucy, she started, and blushed with pleasure to see the earl so near her.

"How late you are, Lionel!" said the general, making a motion as if to surrender his place to him. But Lord Shirley did not choose to see it; and coolly  
saying

saying that he had been come some minutes,—after hoping Catherine was well, he stooped to speak in a low voice to Lucy Merle. The general looked surprised, and Catherine hurt: but the former saw evidently that jealousy occasioned the coolness in the earl's manner, and he was resolved not to take notice of it, but walk on as they were. While Catherine imputed his conduct merely to displeasure at seeing her persist to encourage the attentions of Melvyn, and to be with him in public; and the idea of acting contrary to Lord Shirley's ideas of propriety was so painful to her, that she fell into an uncomfortable silence, whence even the brilliant conversation of Melvyn was unable to raise her entirely.

“I wish that man would leave Miss Shirley!” said Lucy.

“But do you think she wishes it?”

“I hope so; if I did not, I should be miserable:

miserable : if I thought she liked him and approved his addresses, I should be more hurt and disappointed than I can find words to express."

"Dear, charming, enthusiastic girl!" cried Lord Shirley pressing her arm to his side—"Would that your friend on this subject thought and felt as properly as you do!"

There was now a great throng from the meeting of two crowds endeavouring to get into one of the rooms, and meeting a third crowd coming out ; Lord Shirley therefore thought it best to give way and wait till the great pressure was over.

"Impossible, my lord!" cried Mrs. Baynton ; "we shall lose our company."

"Better our company than our lives, madam," said Lord Shirley ; "and even a genteel crowd is a formidable thing."

At this moment a sudden rush convinced her he spoke truth ; and Mrs. Baynton was contented to wait his pleasure.

At

At length the crowd diminished; and as her own party were still tolerably near, Mrs. Baynton was satisfied, especially as she was leaning on the arm of her noble and admired relation; nay, Lucy Merle herself, probably in spite of her democratic principles, was not sorry to be seen under the care of the handsomest young nobleman then in the peerage. But if poor Lucy really had this feeling, she was soon punished for her pride, and humbled accordingly: for just as a sudden and unusual clear space lay before them, calculated to display every one at full length, so that no one however insignificant could pass unheeded, a group of vulgar-looking girls, accompanied by one man, appeared to the startled sight of Lucy Merle; and one of the girls exclaimed "Well, I declare, if there is not cousin Lucy Merle! And how smart she is!"

"Well, my dear, I am so glad to see  
VOL. II. D you,"

you," said she, coming up to her and shaking her hand.

"How are you, Dorothy?" said Lucy, summoning all her energies, and recollecting her principles to enable her to bear with fortitude this trial of her humility.

"Well, I dare say you never were here before? What a fine place it is!—This is my cousin Lucy Merle, Jack (introducing her to the youth she leaned on), and this is our neighbour White's daughter."

"He! what a beautiful man that is with you!" in a loud whisper; "a captain I warrant by his cockade. Who is he?"

But Lucy, not daring to name Lord Shirley, pretended not to hear the question, and asked how all her family was.

"O dear! there's mother, she has had the mumps very bad, and her face swelled as big as two; and as to Bridget, my dear—"

Here,

Here, Mrs. Baynton could endure no more.—‘Bridget, my dear,’ gave the *coup de grace* to her patience ; and darting forward, she did not stop till she found her arm linked in that of her brother.

“What’s the matter!” cried he, alarmed.

“Matter ! Why, you would bring that vulgar Miss Lucy Merle with you ; and now all her vulgar acquaintance are let loose on us : I staid till I could bear it no longer, and I will not leave your arm, General Shirley, come what may.”

“My dear aunt,” said Catherine in a tone of alarm, “what has happened?”

“Ask no questions, child,” said the general ; “you had better not. But let us walk on as slowly as we can.”

No sooner had Mrs. Baynton left them so abruptly, than Lord Shirley painfully felt the embarrassment of his situation, knowing how improper it was for him to be seen at such a place with a young and

D 2

beautiful

beautiful girl on his arm, without another lady,—a girl, too, whom nobody knew ; and who, though very lovely, had not the mien nor the walk of a girl of fashion. It was therefore absolutely necessary for Lord Shirley to break off this interesting detail of family ailments, in order to overtake their company. Consequently, though on this occasion his friendly feelings towards Lucy made him patient as well as seem so, he begged leave to observe, that, however glad Miss Merle might be to see her friends, he feared a longer conversation might separate them from their party for the whole evening.

“ Very true,” said Lucy, checking the ‘ my lord’ that was on her lips.

“ Aye, so it is,” said cousin Dorothy ; “ and so Good night for the present, my dear ; we shall meet again in the round.—I saw Miss Shirley just now ; but she is a great lady now, and she did not  
care



care to see me. Do you ever happen to see her now?"

"O yes, frequently," said Lucy; and—"but here Lord Shirley squeezed her arm to be silent, fearing she might say she was then of her party, in her wish to defend her friend, and thereby expose Catherine to be assailed as poor Lucy had been. Lucy once more nodded her head kindly, and Lord Shirley drew her away."

"I am so hurt!" she said. "But this is folly too, my lord; you knew before what sort of connexions mine were, and you are too consciously great to be degraded by such momentary association."

"I know I was quite right in stopping to speak to them."

"You behaved admirably," replied Lord Shirley; "and I would out of respect for you have listened patiently to the detail of family evils, had I not feared to injure your reputation and my own by  
running

running the risk I mentioned ; for indeed you are too lovely and I too well known for us to appear here alone and arm-and-arm, without exciting inquiry and suspicion."

In vain however they walked rapidly forward ; they could not see those whom they sought : but they were met by two gentlemen who stopped Lord Shirley, one of whom asking him some frivolous questions, examined Lucy's face in the meanwhile with great freedom.

" Upon my soul, Shirley," cried he at length in a whisper which Lucy overheard, " this is very impudent in you indeed—quite dashing—I could not have expected this from a man of your character, and a man of your morals too !"

" My morals, colonel, are the same as ever," replied Lord Shirley forcing a laugh ; " and so are your manners, I see."

" Miss

“Miss Merle, this is Colonel Mallison: and this, sir, is Miss Merle, the intimate friend of Miss Shirley.”

The colonel looked rather foolish; but, affecting to laugh, begged to know where the Shirley was, as he concluded if she was in the gardens they would have been together. But without waiting for an answer, he continued, “The Shirley was expected at the Duchess of C——’s last night; but some one said it was useless to expect her, for she was no doubt at home reading homilies to her grandpapa.”

“Very likely indeed,” said Lord Shirley coolly; “and perhaps very true too. Was it so, Miss Merle? were you reading a homily?”

“No: we were reading Don Quixote!”

“What! does the Shirley read such profane books as that? Well, rather she than I—the don’s and his squire’s jokes I have no relish for—ha, ha, ha!”

“So

“ So I should suppose,” observed Lucy sarcastically.

“ Why so ? ”

“ Because you seem to have such an unaccountable relish for your own,” said Lucy, who had been offended at the familiar and saucy mode in which this gentleman had mentioned her friend.

“ So, so, your servant ! You are a wit, I perceive ; and wit is a very dangerous weapon to wield, take my word for it.”

“ Is it possible, sir, that you can say this from your own experience ? ” returned Lucy. While Lord Shirley, though he did not like severe repartee in women, could not help enjoying this ; as he dared not resent the colonel’s rude mention of Catherine himself, and yet wished him to be reproved for it. But though he stood still, talking to this gentleman, in hopes that his party might pass them, they did not appear : and seeing a gentleman who

who was he knew acquainted with them, he asked if he had seen them.

“ Yes,” he replied ; “ I saw them go into the large room not long ago.”

Thither then he resolved to follow them.

But though they went from room to room, and even sat down in hopes they might pass them, their search was still in vain, much to the vexation of Lucy, as she found herself again distressed by the notice of a young man apparently intoxicated, who seemed from his own appearance and that of his companions to be of the rank of a gentleman. Luckily, as she thought, the earl, who was on the look-out for their friends, did not observe his behaviour, nor hear the rapturous compliments which he whispered in her ear. But construing perhaps her forbearance into approbation, the young man still followed her when they returned into the gardens : and when Lord Shirley de-

D 5

terminated,

terminated, as a last resource, to stand on one side under one of the upper rooms, where it is scarcely possible, except on a very full night indeed, not to see every one distinctly, this importunate stranger stationed himself by Lucy's side, and begged to know where he could see her again, for that the sight of her was necessary to his existence: and as he said this he seized her arm.—Lucy instantly clung to the arm of Lord Shirley, who turning hastily round, beheld and understood what was passing, and desired to know if that gentleman was an acquaintance of hers.

“ Oh, no, no! I never saw him before,” she exclaimed.

“ Then you shall see him no longer, I am determined,” said the earl, putting himself between him and her.

“ By what right, sir, do you insult a lady under my protection?” cried he.

“ I suppose I have a right to admire  
a fine

a fine woman," cried the stranger; "and I shall continue to do so in spite of you."

"You had better not attempt it, sir."

Then seeing he had evidently taken too much wine, he called to a gentleman who seemed to belong to him, and advised him to lead his friend away, as he should be sorry to be forced to have recourse to violence.

"Violence!" said the youth: "Come on, who's afraid?"

The young man hesitated: when another of the party came up and said "Come, let us prevail on him to go. Come; you are quite wrong, I assure you; and the gentleman you are insulting is Lord Shirley."

"And what then? I am as good a lord as he, an't I? and I am glad he is my equal, for now I can fight him."

"But you must be quite sober," replied the earl, "before I can think of fighting you."

The

The enraged youth on hearing this immediately darted forward : but Lucy threw herself between him and Lord Shirley and received the intended blow on her shoulder. This sobered him a little ; and giving way to rapturous lamentations, he fell on his knees to her.

A crowd had now gathered ; and his companions raised up the prostrate admirer ; who, taking his card from his pocket, gave it to the earl. “There,” said he, “you see I am no boaster—The Earl of Livesay.”

“And here is my card,” coolly replied Lord Shirley : when looking up, to his great joy he saw his own party coming, and without Melvyn, who had left them some minutes, finding his efforts vain to overcome Catherine’s taciturnity.”

As soon as Lucy saw Catherine, she ran up to her and burst into tears, which shocked Lord Livesay’s companions so much,



much, that they took him away by force : for they now found that, though certainly in a suspicious situation, Lucy, whoever she was, was a respectable young woman.

“So, madam,” said Lord Shirley angrily to Mrs. Baynton, “and is it thus you forsake your duty ? Was it kind, was it womanly, to leave a young and beautiful girl without a protector of her own sex, with a young man of my age and rank at a place like this ?”

“Dear me ! do you suppose I thought that young person under my care ? Besides, I concluded she was not very nice, and that she would think you sufficient protection. If not, she could go I knew to her cousins Dolly and Bridget, and so forth.”

“But, madam, if in protecting Miss Merle my life was endangered, I believe you will allow that it would have been as well

well if you had afforded her your protection. This is beyond a joke, madam, and never did I find myself in so disagreeable a predicament before."

"My dear lord," cried Catherine, "what is all this?" and as she spoke she drew her arm through his.

"It was a base and cruel desertion of an unoffending girl, and I cannot yet forgive it, indeed I cannot."

Lucy in the mean while, taking the general's arm, had whispered in his ear, "Oh, sir! they have exchanged cards—indeed they have."

"Who, my dear?"

"Lord Shirley and Lord Livesay."

"And what for? what is all this about?"

"Oh, sir! they quarrelled about me—

But cannot you make it up?"

"I hope so. I knew this boy's father, but I don't know him."

"Oh,

“ Oh, sir, I can show him to you.”

“ True, so you can: therefore we will fall behind, and then get from them unnoticed.”

Lord Shirley was then walking between the aunt and niece; but too angry with the former to give her his arm, and too much engrossed with telling Catherine what he chose to tell her of his adventures with Lucy, to heed the disappearance of the latter with the general, especially as Catherine had most earnestly assured him that the pleasure of her evening had been entirely spoiled by her fruitless expectation of him.

The general and Lucy found Lord Livesay in the upper box, under which the fracas had taken place; and he was drinking tea, which had brought him a little to his senses.

“ My lord,” said the general, putting Lucy behind him, as he could scarcely  
ly

ly bear to see without resenting it the audacious manner in which the earl was going to accost her—"My lord, I believe I have the honour to address the Earl of Livesay?"

"Yes, sir! you have." Then trying to pass the general, he endeavoured to approach Lucy.

"Stop, young man!" cried the general in a tone and manner that commanded silence, "and presume not to insult a woman under the protection and care of General Shirley."

"General Shirley! O, zounds! I believe I am in the wrong box here. Sir, taking off his hat, I beg your pardon, sir, and the lady's under your protection. Egad, the Shirleys have it all their own way to-night."

"My lord," said the general, "I am in no humour for joking, nor are you in a condition to be responsible for the consequences.

sequences of a joke ; and I am come to speak seriously to you, or to any friend of yours capable of understanding me."

"Sir," said a young man respectfully, "I will attend to any thing you say, and repeat it faithfully to Lord Livesay to-morrow."

"No, no, stand on one side ; I will hear to-night what this noble-looking old gentleman has to say myself."

"Boy, I knew your father ; and a finer fellow, and a more gallant spirit, I never met with in my life."

"Did you,—did you know my father?" cried the youth seizing his hand. "Then you knew the best of men and of parents, and it was a sad day for me when I lost him !" Here he burst into tears, and was some minutes before he recovered himself. "Well, and so you liked him, did you ? God bless you ! I honour every body that honoured my father."

"You

“ You had better honour him yourself, young man, by endeavouring to follow his example. Would *he*, do you think, have come intoxicated to a place of public resort, and, not contented with insulting a young lady, have defied and insulted the brave man who defended her?”

“ No, he would not indeed—But what right have you to preach to me? However, as you were my father’s friend, I forgive you ; but you must know, I did not take her to be a lady.—But as to insulting Lord Shirley, why he insulted me first ; and I declare, after he knew I was a lord, and his equal, he was as insolent as he was before.”

“ His equal !” cried Lucy indignantly.

“ There ! did you hear that?” asked the young earl.

“ Be silent, my dear,” said the general in a low voice : “ recollect that as Lord Shirley’s

Shirley's life may be in some danger, it is better for us to soothe than irritate."

On hearing this the colour faded entirely from her cheek ; and Lord Livesay exclaimed " Why she is as pale now as she was red before ; and I believe she cannot help that suspicious-looking bloom."

" Let the young lady and her bloom alone, my lord," resumed the general: " you shall see both again at a more convenient opportunity, if you will allow me to bring you to reason. I am convinced that the son of my old friend is a gentleman, though the influence of wine has altered him for the time being."

" A gentleman ! To be sure I am ; and whoever says I am not must fight me. Lord Shirley treated me as if I were no gentleman, and he must fight me."

" Not

“Not if I can help it; for it would grieve me to be second in a duel between my noble cousin and the son of a valued friend. No, no! you must not fight, but you must learn to like each other.”

“Yes, when we have fought, if we are not killed, we will shake hands and make it up.”

“Dreadful!” said Lucy; and sunk nearly fainting against the general’s shoulder. “Oh, sir!” she faintly articulated, “if Lord Shirley should be killed, I should never recover it!”

“But he will not even fight.—Lord Livesay, can you see this sweet creature’s agony unmoved? and do you not owe her some compensation for the pain and confusion you have occasioned her?”

“To be sure I do—What can I say to her? Pray forgive me?”

“That



“That is sufficient for her : but surely some apology is due to Lord Shirley.”

“And to me too, if you come to that—Gentlemen,” said the general, “how did the earl behave?”

“Very coolly and very properly,” replied one of them, “and begged us to take our friend away, lest he should forget himself.”

“Then, gentlemen, you will I trust assist me in making up this foolish quarrel?”

“Certainly. But Lord Livesay aimed a blow at Lord Shirley.”

“A blow!” cried the general—“Nay then, unless Lord Livesay excuses that on the plea of intoxication, I can say no more. Oh! how grieved would my poor friend, your father, have been, my lord, to see his son aim an insult at an amiable and gallant nobleman, which with some rash spirits must lead to blood!”

Lucy

Lucy hearing only the last words, was so terrified that she sunk nearly in a swoon into the arms of one of the gentlemen, while Lord Livesay called vehemently for water. At length she recovered ; and as soon as she did so she seized Lord Livesay's hand, and conjured him to make concessions to Lord Shirley.

“ Young man,” said the general kindly, “ remember I was your father's friend, and I would fain be yours. You seem too affectionate a child not to have generous and good feelings, and do not run the risk of clouding over the morning of your life by the crime of murder !”

Lord Livesay was silent. At length he said to his friends, “ Will it not seem dastardly ?”

“ By no means ; you gave the first offence.”

“ How do you think my father, general,

neral, would have wished me to behave?"

"As I wish you—that is nobly: for it is much greater to forgive than to revenge an injury."

"Well; and if I do as you wish, you will take notice of me, will you, and sometimes indulge me by praising my father to me?"

"To be sure I will. Well, then, tomorrow morning you will wait on Lord Shirley in person, or by deputy?"

"No, no, to-night—let me take the dose at once. I should not be able to sleep if I had the necessity of an apology hanging over my head to-morrow morning—And see, there is the earl himself."

The general and Lucy now looked over the box, and saw the party under it; they also saw a perturbed and even angry expression

expression on Lord Shirley's countenance.

Lord Livesay and his friends were going down to the earl; but the general beckoned him up stairs to them: and the ladies, fearing they knew not what, followed closely at his heels. Lord Livesay was just going to address him, when he started back on sight of Catherine, and exclaimed "Who is that angel?—or that queen? or that divinity?" and taking off his hat, he stood bowing from the profoundness of his respect.

"That is my grand-daughter," cried the general, "Miss Shirley."

"So, she is a Shirley too! And I suppose that fine elderly lady is her mother? Upon my word you are a fine family; and though you all look devilish proud, you have a right to do so."

"Pray," said Lord Shirley impatiently,

"was

“was it to hear this that we were invited hither?”

“No, indeed,” said Lord Livesay, “I certainly did not invite you here to flatter you, for I have not reason to like you well enough; but I am told I behaved ill to you, and that an apology is your due. I have made my excuses to the young lady, who seems as proud as any Shirley can be; and now, my lord, I beg you to excuse the insults I was guilty of to her and you, and the blow I aimed at you. If this be not sufficient, you know where to find me: that is all.”

“It is quite sufficient,” said the earl; “and I expected as much from you to-morrow, my lord, though not to-night—but I must say that this matter should have been discussed in the presence of gentlemen only.”

“Then let us retire.”

“ Oh, no, no !” exclaimed all the ladies.

“ At least the ladies must hear me beg you, Lord Livesay, to excuse whatever I said that was harsh in the moment of irritation.” And taking off his hat he presented his hand to the young earl, who accepted it.

Then complaining that his head ached, and that he feared he had exposed himself very much, Lord Livesay gazed once more with respectful admiration at Catherine, and bowing round, went in search of his carriage, followed by his friends.

“ How tipsy he is !” said Mrs. Baynton, not liking his calling her an elderly lady.

In a few moments one of them returned to assure the ladies that there was nothing more to fear, for that Lord Livesay

say was a good fellow, and would be quite ashamed of himself the next day.

When he was gone, Catherine said  
 “What odd ideas of goodness that young man must have! So a man who insults a modest woman, affronts an honourable man, and comes intoxicated to a public place, is a good fellow!—My dear lord,” she added, “I hope I shall never hear you called a good fellow, for I should be ever afterwards ashamed of owning you for my relation.”

“I trust that you never will,” replied Lord Shirley: “but surely, having occupied this room so long, we ought to be so vulgar as to have supper; especially as poor Miss Merle looks dreadfully pale.”

“Poor Miss Merle has nearly had a fainting fit,” said the general, “therefore I think we had better go home directly; and, if you think it right, give something for the loan of the box.”

“By all means,” cried Catherine, distressed at hearing of Lucy’s illness.

“And if your carriage is up let me go home in it, if you please, Lord Shirley,” said Mrs. Baynton, *I am not going to Hampton.*”

“Then *I am*,” said he, “and you, madam, may take my carriage as soon as I have found it.” So saying he went in search of his servants; and soon returning, he conducted the sullen Mrs. Baynton to the carriage; and in a few minutes more he was with the two friends and the general on the road to Hampton.

“I could not have slept to-night,” said Lord Shirley as soon as they were out of the crowd, “without knowing the particulars of your conference, general, with my antagonist: but I suspect that I owe the pacification to my fair friend here, whose whole conduct to-night in difficult situations has assured to her my respect and esteem.”

Lucy,



Lucy, whose spirits had been greatly agitated, was so overcome by this tribute of praise, that leaning her head on Catherine's shoulder she burst into tears.

Lord Shirley then related all the embarrassments of the evening, especially those consequent on his being left alone with Lucy: and when he ended, he desired the general to be as open as he had been. And having obtained his wish, he found Lucy still more endeared to him than before, as it was fear for his life that had occasioned her indisposition.

"I am the only person who has to undergo any self-blame in this evening's adventures," said Catherine; "and I am painfully self-condemned indeed."

"You!"

"Yes: had I not encouraged Mr. Melvyn to walk with us, Lord Shirley when he came would have joined me, and then my grandfather would have given

given his arm either to Lucy or his sister, and we should all three of us have been protected :—however, I have been sufficiently punished for my fault, for I never passed a more disagreeable evening.”

“My dear, you are blaming yourself unjustly,” said the general; and so said Lucy: but Lord Shirley was silent. At last he said, “Candour obliges me to own that I think you were, Miss Shirley, the original cause of this distress; but I was more to blame than you in giving way to temper, and pique: and in not choosing to notice the general’s wish to give you up to my care, I was wanting in proper respect both to you and to myself: and I too have been pretty severely punished, but I hope never to be so churlish again.”

“Ah!” cried Lucy, laughing, “*ne gagez pas.*” And the earl felt that a man  
in

in love, and jealous, could not answer for never being churlish again.

“There is one pleasant result, however, from the busy scene of this evening,” said Catherine, “which I shall reflect upon with pleasure; and that is, the high character my friend Lucy has obtained,—a sufficient compensation to me for that degree of character which I have lost. I wish my aunt had heard your panegyric on her, Lord Shirley.”

“She shall hear it, depend upon it: for I will find her where she lies asleep, and in her ear I’ll holla—Lucy Merle!”

“That will not be quite decorous, I think,” observed the general, laughing; “and I must certainly call you out if you do; and believe me, I am not much inclined to fight her battles any way.”

“My poor aunt!” cried Catherine: “was ever any one so much her own enemy as  
she

she is ! Yet she has a fine understanding, and can be agreeable."

"Aye, I thought you would say something in her praise, or not mention her at all," said Lucy : "but it would not become me to talk of her now, as she has been the means of such evil to me, or rather of such misery. Still, to have my conduct approved in any way as it has been, is a balm which I am apt to think a sufficient one for all I have endured, except the misery of expecting that a duel must take place."

The coach now stopped at the general's door, and the ladies retired to their apartments.

"O my dearest friend !" cried Lucy, whom Catherine accompanied to hers, "if you ever marry any one but Lord Shirley, I never can forgive you ! Had you but seen him, and heard him to-night ! had

had you witnessed his pretty behaviour during my conversation with my vulgar relations ; and had you heard his kind encouraging words, and seen the respectful manner in which he presented me as your friend to an impertinent colonel,—you would have been delighted with him. Then the happy union of coolness and spirit with which he defended me from that tipsy boy ! O dear ! that ever I should live to be so enamoured of a nobleman ! I must return home before my principles are quite corrupted.”

“Reformed, you mean,” said Catherine smiling : “but it will be time enough for me to decide whether I shall have Lord Shirley or not, when he seems to wish to marry me : and I suspect it is because you believe he is not likely to have me, that you are desirous he should.”

“Oh, no, no ! all those improper feel-

ings are gone, believe me ; and since your relation of what happened on the birthday, a better modification of the same feelings makes me wish you to marry, and soon ; and I know no one worthy of you, but your noble cousin :—I am sure he loves you.”

“ Oh, no ! it is by no means sure—but Good-night ! you look frightfully pale, and I also want rest.” Then kissing her more affectionately than usual, Catherine retired to her room ; but it was long before her mind would allow her to sleep.

## CHAPTER III.

**T**HE next morning, even sooner than the customs of the world warrant, Lord Livesay rode up to the gate ; and, having sent in his name, was admitted to the general in his study ; where being joined by Lord Shirley, the young earl repeated his apologies for his conduct of the night before, and earnestly entreated to be allowed to tender them again to the young lady whom he had insulted.

Accordingly Lord Shirley requested permission to introduce him into Catherine's sitting-room ; and almost with trembling footsteps the young peer followed him thither. On entering, he advanced blushing like a girl, and begged to have the honour of being again presented to Miss Shirley and her friend,

that

that he might apologize with the deepest humility for his conduct of the night before. "But to you, Miss Merle," said he, "my particular excuses are due; and I only wonder you can suffer me in your presence."

Lord Livesay spoke this with such hesitation and confusion, that Lucy, though she had previously resolved to receive him with repelling coldness, could not keep her resolution, but kindly assured him of her entire forgiveness; while Catherine obligingly added, "And I hope this unpleasant business will have pleasant consequences; and that my grandfather, by having been thus introduced to the son of his old friend, will feel for him much of the regard which he felt for the father."

The young earl replied, "that the manner by which he was first known to the general would not, he feared, make him



him anticipate his acquaintance with pleasure, except for his father's sake.—But no matter," added he, "I loved my father so dearly, that I am willing to owe any good that may befall me to recollection of him, rather than knowledge of me."

Is it possible, thought all the persons present, that this modest elegant young man can be the noisy, quarrelsome, impudent, fiery-eyed boy we saw last night? If wine can so change a man, how can a rational being persist to drink it to excess?—But they were called from contemplating the agreeable contrast visible between Lord Livesay in the morning and the same person in the evening, by the entrance of a visitor not quite so welcome to Lord Shirley, as the servant announced Mr. Melvyn. Nor were his feelings rendered more pleasant, when, on casting a side glance on Catherine, he saw that  
her

her eye became downcast and her cheek covered with blushes : and such indeed was her evident embarrassment, that a man less vain than Melvyn might have drawn flattering conclusions from it.

How often have I seen such emotion betrayed and commented upon, when the blushing being thus judged of was as free from any attachment for the man whose presence embarrassed her, as was the heart of Catherine free from any partiality towards Melvyn !

Various and contradictory are the feelings and the conduct of a jealous man !— Though Lord Shirley knew that if he went away he should leave Melvyn with Catherine, and should not know how she conducted herself towards him, whether familiarly or coldly, he endured so much pain in seeing them together, that he invited Lord Livesay to ride with him till dinner time, he having promised to dine  
and

and sleep at Hampton on the general's earnest invitation, and his servant having consequently been dispatched to London for a change of clothes.

Catherine blushed deeply when she heard this proposal ; and Lord Shirley feared it was from pleasure that she might be left to enjoy the conversation of the fascinating Melvyn unrestrained by his reproving eye ; and he immediately regretted that Lord Livesay had so readily accepted his invitation. But it was too late to retract ; therefore, taking the earl's arm, he led him away to the stables.

"This is very strange: I thought Shirley was going to walk with you, ladies," said the general.

"So he was," replied Catherine ; "but I suppose that he concluded we should not walk, as Mr. Melvyn is here." And she said this with such embarrassment, and

Melvyn

Melvyn saw in Lord Shirley's conduct such evidences of jealousy, that his heart bounded with exultation, though he politely expressed his regret that his visit should have been so ill-timed as to have interfered with any plans of Lord Shirley or the ladies: he had made (he said) a point of taking the earliest opportunity of bringing the general the flower-seeds he had promised him, and the sermon he had offered to lend Miss Shirley, and he should now take his leave.

"But as Lord Shirley is gone to ride, you will gratify the general," said Catherine, "by staying to see his fine flowers, and to convince yourself that these you bring will not appear in bad company." She then led the way to the hot-house, whither Lucy reluctantly followed.

"What can she mean," thought Lucy, "by being so civil to this man! It cannot

not be that she is, like other women, flattered by the consciousness that he admires her."

However, her regrets and ill-humour could not remove Melvyn from his station, nor recall the truant earl; and even Lucy herself was not long proof against his entertaining power and winning manners, though she was provoked with herself for yielding to the fascination.

As soon as Lord Shirley was gone a mile on his ride, he wished himself back again; and Lord Livesay, who when sober was painfully humble in his opinion of himself, was convinced that Lord Shirley fell into such profound reverie merely from his dulness as a companion, and became as silent as the earl.

But selfish abstraction could not long engross the generous mind of Lord Shirley, and he forced himself to talk; for which effort he was soon rewarded by  
hearing

hearing the young earl pronounce a most animated eulogium on Catherine's beauty and manners, but pronounced in such a manner as to convince Lord Shirley he had no wishes or intention of being his rival.—Of Lucy he spoke more guardedly, and with less warmth. But he took care to ask if she was of the family of Merles in Worcestershire; and he looked disappointed when Lord Shirley informed him (as he thought it right to do) that Miss Merle was a young woman of neither family nor fortune, but highly respectable both from her talents and her virtues, and greatly beloved by Miss Shirley, who had lived some time with her and her mother.

“Miss Shirley's friendship for her is of itself a recommendation,” said the young earl sighing. “Her love is reported to be given to you, though some say Mr. Melvyn will be the happy man; but

but I don't believe it, as in my eyes you have every possible advantage over him. But I should not have ventured to name this nonsense to you, had I not, even in the short time I saw you together, observed that you and your fair cousin had no symptoms of love about you, and that the report was consequently false."

"There!" thought Lord Shirley, "even this boy sees there is nothing like love on her side; and I am glad I have self-command enough to conceal its existence on mine. However, my determination is taken, and to-morrow or the next day I set off on my travels; for I will not be the victim of a hopeless passion; and, as I have thought before, perhaps when I am gone she may miss me!"

At the idea that he was going away and should not see her again, perhaps for years, the earl's tenderness returned; and with it the wish of seeing her again directly.

rectly. Then declaring, which was very true, that he had been extremely rude in leaving the ladies, as he had promised to walk with them, he proposed returning before it was too late to get a walk before dinner ;—" And I hope," added he involuntarily, " Melvyn will be gone before we return."

" Then he has not, I see, your consent to marry your fair cousin?"

" No—by no means."

" But surely the reception she gave him was flattering?"

" Did you think so?" answered the earl, starting and turning pale at this confirmation of his own opinion.

Lord Livesay observing his manner, looked earnestly at him; and could not help seeing that though Catherine might be indifferent to Lord Shirley, he was not to her. He therefore tried to soften the pain of the wound he had unintentionally



tionally inflicted, by saying, "But I don't know Miss Shirley well enough to judge of her sentiments by her manner, and women are often most attentive to those whom they least like in their hearts."

"True," said Lord Shirley, "and men too sometimes."—They now by mutual consent clapped spurs to their horses, and soon returned to the general. But Melvyn was still there, and listening with delight to Catherine's singing and playing; and even Lucy had been prevailed upon to join her friend in amusing Mr. Melvyn and in singing a trio with him and her friend; for Melvyn amongst his other talents possessed that of singing.

Lucy had heard of fascination, and she believed Melvyn had the art. But some persons have the power of carrying whatever point they set their mind upon, and charming away prejudices the best founded.—It was with the greatest  
difficulty

difficulty the general could prevail on himself not to ask Melvyn to dinner ; and he did resolve to invite him some day when he was sure Lord Shirley would not be there.

Lord Livesay, who now thoroughly comprehended the state of Lord Shirley's heart, and saw his lip quiver when he beheld through the window the happiness of Melvyn, took upon himself to speak when they entered the apartment at the close of the duet, and assured the ladies they had shortened their ride, and were returned purposely to make amends for their rudeness in going away, and also to offer their attendance on them in the walk projected in the morning.

“ I am so glad to hear it ! ” said Lucy rising : “ I have been wishing for a walk all day . ”

“ And I remember that I have been the obstacle to your being indulged , ” said

Melvyn

Melvyn smiling and rising; "but I will be so no longer."

"You have been so agreeable, sir," said Lucy blushing, "that I forgot very soon my wishes and my regrets; but now, if you do not mean to go with us, I must own it would be kind in you to go away."

"But perhaps Mr. Melvyn will accompany you?" said the general.

"Perhaps he will," said Catherine faintly; while both the earls looked at her with a scrutinizing look, which made her appear still more confused.

Melvyn however was firm in his refusal to stay no longer; and he was quite satisfied with the morning's mischief and success; for he had evidently made Lord Shirley jealous, and he flattered himself that Catherine felt for him an incipient but decided preference.

As soon as he was gone, Catherine's ease and cheerfulness returned, but not  
Lord

Lord Shirley's ; for he could attribute her former restraint of manner and her present ease to the sort of timid, doubting solicitude, which a woman, aye, and a man too, feels in the presence of a beloved object, before the certainty of being beloved converts what before was anxious suspense into a sensation of exquisite enjoyment.

Lord Livesay, who though very young had that degree of feeling himself which gives a quick insight into the feelings of others, was already enough interested in Lord Shirley's welfare to see his disquietude with great pity, especially as he could not help thinking he had cause for alarm. Still, was increased cheerfulness in the absence of a particular person a proof of love for that person ? Yes, if that absence had been preceded by circumstances which proved the attachment of the departed guest ; cheerfulness being the indication

dication of a light and lightened heart ; and perhaps, thought Lord Livesay, the visit this morning has convinced Miss Shirley of Melvyn's love.

The ladies now returned to the gentlemen once more equipped for their expedition. While Lord Livesay was debating within himself to which of the ladies it would be most expedient for him to offer his arm, he believed it would be right to give it to Miss Shirley rather than Lucy, because he felt towards the latter a degree of liking which honour forbade him even to wish to indulge in one way, and pride and prudence equally prohibited him from indulging in another. But Lord Shirley decided the matter at once ; for he took Lucy on one side, to ask her what brought Melvyn to Hampton ; and as he did so he drew her arm under his.

Catherine felt rather hurt at her noble cousin's unusual desertion, and at-

tributed it to his continued disapprobation of her civility to Melvyn; but she accepted the young earl's arm with a smile, and they proceeded on their projected tour of the common.

Lord Livesay was soon induced, by the benevolent sweetness of Catherine's manner and the polite attention with which she listened to him, to talk on a variety of subjects: but the favourite one was the merits of his lost father; and with a conversation of this nature Catherine's own feelings led her to sympathize so sincerely, that the walk to her was so full of pensive and tender recollections, that even Lord Shirley's coldness was forgotten.

But not such were the sensations of Lord Shirley during his ride: for Lucy, even Lucy, who had cheered his hopes by her dislike of Melvyn, was obliged to own that his powers of captivation had  
driven

driven away the remembrance of her prejudices against him; and that, till they began to sing and play, time had insensibly passed, and even Lord Shirley's absence had no longer been felt.

"Well," said Lord Shirley with a deep sigh, "when I am gone away not to return for years, you will possibly both of you miss and regret me."

"What! you going away for years! I can't believe it, I can't endure it, I can't suffer it," cried Lucy. "What can you mean, Lord Shirley? But I am sure you only say so to torment me."

"Indeed I don't: but I conjure you not to say one word of my intention to your friend or the general: when my mind is made up they shall know it; till then, if you have any regard for me, you will be silent." Lucy promised she would, as a proof of her regard, but assured him

that she knew not how to keep such a load on her mind unshared.

They returned at length to the house only just in time to dress for dinner : and not one of the party when they met, the general excepted, sat down to table without some painful consciousness or other pressing on their spirits. Lord Livesay had a great mind to fall in love with Lucy Merle, but dared not ;—Catherine was uneasy, because she saw she had vexed Lord Shirley and incurred his disapprobation ;—Lord Shirley was a prey to many of the disquieting feelings attendant on love ;—and Lucy was tormented by the idea of his near departure.—But the general from inclination, and Catherine from principle, exerted themselves for the entertainment of their guests. And when she and Lucy retired, it was already evident that the well-bred, modest, sensible

Lord



Lord Livesay of the morning, was in a fair way of becoming the flushed, riotous, and disagreeable Lord Livesay of the evening.

“That creature will be horribly tipsy again,” said Lucy.

“Poor young man !” observed Catherine ; “ how shocking it is to think that the indulgence of a vice should thus convert a man into a beast—an agreeable companion into a disgusting driveller ! What can make him swallow wine thus ? Perhaps he is unhappy, and does it to drown care.”

“ Spoken with your usual candour,” said Lucy : “ But how should a boy like Lord Livesay have contrived to become acquainted with care ? She usually selects her acquaintance from the elderly, not the young. What cares then can this young thing have, unless he is in love ?”

“ My dear Lucy, how can you talk  
thus

thus thoughtlessly and forgetfully?—You and I are younger than Lord Livesay, yet we have known care and sorrow too—have we not?”

Lucy mournfully replied in the affirmative; and, as if thought was her foe on that subject, proposed reading aloud till the gentlemen came.

As soon as they joined them, Lord Livesay was (what they expected to see him) converted by wine into a new character; and the modest, quiet young man, converted into a red-eyed, staring, daring man of the town. Lord Shirley and the general both looked shocked to see him so degraded, and the latter had certainly done as much as was consistent with hospitality to prevent it. But poor Lord Livesay had been too long habituated to this dangerous excitement to be easy without it; and his temperate companions, to whom wine in the slightest excess

cess was disgusting, could not help suspecting like Catherine, that he had originally given way to drinking, in order to fly, thereby, from himself.

“Perhaps,” thought Lord Shirley, “he has been extravagant, and is pursued by creditors whom he cannot pay. If that be the case, how gladly should I assist him to the utmost of my power to set his mind at ease, and by that means deprive him of the necessity of this daily stimulus !” And at the same moment the same generous thought was passing in the mind of the general.

The greatest and most unpleasant change made in Lord Livesay by the wine that he had drunken was visible in his manner to Lucy. The high-principled reserve with which he had before treated her, at once indicative of honour and delicacy, had now given way to a persevering and troublesome attention, which

showed

showed itself in following her round the room, though he was still sufficiently restrained by consciousness of where he was, not to address her in the language of a lover.

But he soon grew so much worse by breathing the air in an open viranda, that the general resolved he should not return home that night on horseback. He therefore ordered a bed to be prepared for him: and some time before the usual hour for retiring arrived, Lord Livesay owned himself very ready to occupy it.

The kind-hearted and respectable persons whom he left together did not amuse themselves, as is too commonly the case, with censuring or ridiculing the infirmity of the departed guest; but generously deplored, and as generously resolved, if possible, to cure it: while the general thought himself authorized by his friendship with the father, to admonish, and,  
if

if possible, reform the errors of the son. It was evident that he had the habit of being intoxicated, or he must have abstained from excess that evening, as he was in the company of those who had suffered so much from his intemperance the night before.—“He has certainly something on his mind,” said Catherine: and her companions, though not as habitually candid as herself, because not as habitually under the influence of a religious spirit, agreed with her entirely: and, as I before observed, both the gentlemen secretly resolved to gain his confidence if possible.—There is certainly something in a benevolent resolve that possesses a sure, and almost an exclusive power of cheering the mind that is brooding over its own sorrows, and of banishing for the time being the influence of every selfish calamity.

No sooner did Lord Shirley conceive the welcome hope of relieving a burthened  
 F 5 mind,

mind, and saving a fellow-creature from destruction, than his eye resumed its lustre and his step its elasticity ; while even Melvyn, the formidable Melvyn, was forgotten.

“ Would it were possible to save this poor young man ! ” cried Catherine.

“ Would it were ! But perhaps it is,” said Lord Shirley ; “ and at any rate it is worth the trial.”

“ Aye—but should his disorder be love,” said Lucy, “ what is to be done then ? ”

“ Why, if it be,” replied the general archly, “ I suspect you are the person we must look to for his cure, as you have either banished for a time the remembrance of his first love, or you are likely to become his first love yourself.”

“ Me ! O no ! But if I effected the banishment you talk of, it was only by means of wine, and as wine did ; and  
when

when he is sober to-morrow he will forget me and my intoxicating qualities. And your latter representation of my power over him, present and to come, must be false ; for there never was even the faintest feeling of true love, I am convinced, without respect, and respect so profound and so habitual, that it would not be in the power even of drunkenness to overcome it ; and I think you will allow the earl's conduct to me, though better than it was last night, was not what it ought to be."

"Certainly not, my dear ; and I assure you, that unless this boy promises to be more temperate when he dines with me, I shall not invite him again while you stay. But, Lucy, you have very high notions indeed of love, if you fancy it capable of conquering the power of wine : but I suppose you consider the influence both of wine and of love as intoxicating, and  
you

you think their strength pretty equally balanced."

"Yes—where the love is as pure and as good as the wine. But is it not supposed that a glass of brandy taken after excess of wine restores its tone to the digestion, and sobers the person that takes it?"

"I believe it is so imagined by some."

"Well then, I think that the sight and influence of that object who is truly beloved, will operate on the lover's mind as brandy would on his stomach. And now I trust I have made my case clear."

"Perfectly so—and if it be not true, it is at least ingenious. But I observe, Lucy, that you and I have been the only speakers in this conversation ; Lionel and Catherine have said nothing."

"Oh ! they think the more, depend on it ; and I should like to hear the result of their deliberations."

"For



“For my part,” said Catherine, smiling, “I never talk on a subject I do not understand, and one on which I am entirely ignorant ; therefore I never talk of what are, or what are not, the signs of love.”

“And I,” observed Lord Shirley gravely, “think love, like religion, too sacred to be made the theme even of witty speculations. But pray, Miss Merle, whence did you derive your delicate notions of the passion ? notions so truly becoming the delicacy of your sex, that I honour you for them : and I feel that a woman who is refined enough to think that respect in a lover is the surest proof of love, is secured from any less reputable evidence of the existence of the passion. But why do you laugh ?”

“Perhaps from great conceit on my part.”

“But we all know you are honest enough to tell us, notwithstanding, what it is.”

“Still I am almost ashamed ; but I  
will

will own that I was laughing to think, my lord, how our mutual good qualities have annihilated our prejudices against each other ;—you have forgotten my democratic principles in what you think my better feelings and motives of action, and I have forgotten in your merits and your kindness my dislike of lords and coronets.”

“ True,” said the general ; “ and sincerely do I wish that such liberality were more common ; for by that means party distinctions and political feuds would be done away, or at least the sharp edges of such animosities would be rubbed off, and the great commandment—that we should love one another—would no longer be like an old penal statute, known to exist, but never acted upon.”

“ Never acted upon !” cried Catherine : “ Alas ! if so, what a world am I going to become acquainted with !”

“ But

"But you, my blessed child," cried the general tenderly, "have acquainted yourself already so well with a better world, that you are armed, I trust, against all its evils and its dangers.—But it grows late. Good night, my dear girls!"

"Good night," replied Catherine; "and Good night, my dear lord," she added, in a tone that completely dispelled all Lord Shirley's uneasy feelings, and vibrated on his ear long after Catherine had lost her consciousness in sleep.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning Lord Shirley, who could never rest when he had a kind action to perform, rose very soon; and when informed that Lord Livesay was awake, he asked leave to be admitted to his bed-side : and he was so.

“What up already, Shirley?” said the young earl : “but, I recollect, you never drink too much wine, therefore you do not want much sleep : but by the bye I am afraid I was very tipsy last night, and behaved very ill.”

“You were so, and you did not behave quite properly—In short, Lord Livesay sober, and the same gentleman intoxicated, are two distinct characters. The former is a modest, sensible, well-bred, good-looking

looking young man—what the other is I will not say.”

“ Yes, you may, I can bear it ; for I know I deserve to be roughly handled.”

“ But what right have I to handle you roughly ? No, I have better views respecting you. It appears to me so strange that a youth of your high rank, good feelings, and good sense, should every day make a point of depriving himself of his senses, and the consciousness of possessing so many desirable things, that I believe there must be some strong operating cause for such a dereliction of all that is right ; and it is my earnest wish to know what this cause is, that I may try if it be in my power to remove the cause, in order to annihilate the effect.”

Lord Livesay sighed deeply, and hid his face in the pillow : then looking up rather haughtily, he said, “ I beg, my lord,  
you

you will leave me and my secrets to myself—This may be well meant, but it is devilishly officious in an acquaintance of yesterday.”

“ But I thought we were friends, Livesay—you told me so yesterday morning.”

“ No—I told you so last night, probably, as I am very loving when I am drunk.”

“ And so you are when sober ; a generous-hearted, kind, feeling being, and too conscious that you are capable of a friendly action yourself, to scruple much allowing a friend to do one by you.”

“ And why the devil should you think I want to have such actions done by me ? Why not suppose I drink wine merely from love of it, and because I am a *sot* ?”

“ Because there is nothing sottish about you ; and you throw down your wine like a man that wants to get a certain quantity down in order to drown care, and not like

like one who drinks it because he likes the taste of it,—that is slowly, and sippingly.”

“You are plausibly observant. But come now, admitting that I do drink to banish care, How do you know that my cares do not proceed from love ; and how could you help me then ?”

“But I am sure they do not proceed from love.”

“How can you possibly tell that ?”

“Because the restrained but conscious manner in which you talked of Miss Merle this morning, and your behaviour towards her to-night, betokened too strong a feeling towards her to be consistent with a real passion towards another woman.”

“Shirley, you deal with the devil ! I am sure you do, and I will have no more to say to you. Go, go, pray leave me !”

“Certainly, if you desire it ; for I have no right to force myself upon your confidence.

confidence. Still it would delight me to serve you—it would delight, nay it would benefit my own mind to be allowed to assist in unburthening yours.”

“ But who told you my mind was burthened?”

“ My own observations, and my own wishes ; for I could not bear to think that you drank to such a disgusting excess for the mere sake of the liquor.”

“ No, I am not quite such a beast as that, thank Heaven !”

“ There, now you have confirmed my suspicions.”

“ Yes, but I have told you nothing.”

“ No, but I know you will tell me all.”

“ Do you know that you are a very impudent fellow, Shirley ! If you talk thus artfully and insinuatingly to women, I wonder they can ever withstand you.”

“ But I never do, except when I wish

to



to do them good : and as I wish to do you good, I talk to you in the manner you are pleased to call insinuating."

"Do me good ! No, it is impossible."

"Well, let me try."

"I will think of it ; but leave me now."

And Lord Shirley obeyed.

In an hour after, Lord Shirley, who was walking in the garden, was joined there by the young earl, who in great emotion declared that he had made up his mind to confide in him.

"I trust you will never have cause to repent your confidence ; and the sooner you give it to me the better," cried Lord Shirley soothingly ; "therefore I am at your service here now, or I will attend you immediately to town."

"Here now, if you please, or I may repent," replied Lord Livesay : and the earl led him to his own apartment.

Lord Livesay had only to relate a too  
common

common tale. He was only eighteen when he lost his father and became heir to a handsome entailed and unentailed property in land and money : but his extravagance had so far exceeded his income till of age, that he had taken up money from Jews and other people at such exorbitant interest, and in such profusion, that when he came of age he had been forced to sell some estates to enable him to pay the demand on him, which though not bound in law to pay, he felt himself obliged to do in honour.

Lord Shirley on hearing this did not interrupt his new friend in order to compliment him on his integrity ; for he saw nothing to praise in it, as he felt that no man of honour could do otherwise. It may be uncandid, but I confess that the eulogy bestowed on a generous, a charitable, or an honest action, is always with me a test of the person's own qualities.

If

If inclined to be generous, charitable, and honest, in spite of all temptation to be otherwise, they will, I conclude, be temperate in their praise of actions which they feel they should themselves perform : but if, on the contrary, they launch out into loud panegyric, and speak of the action and the actor as noble, wonderful, and so forth ; then I suspect that the feelings and the power they thus eulogize are comparatively strangers to their hearts, and above their abilities.

Reader, forgive this digression. I will return to my narrative.—Lord Livesay went on to say that, having thus diminished his income without the power of diminishing his expenditure, he had continued to contract debt on debt, in which folly he had been assisted by an extravagant mistress, who had refused to leave him ; and who therefore made his home, his reflections, and his prospects so wretched,

ed,

ed, that he had learnt to drink to drive away care, and that he expected to be forced to sell all the estates that were not entailed, and yet be obliged to incur exile, or imprisonment.

When he had ended the mortifying and melancholy detail, Lord Shirley said, "I never before felt so grateful for the happier circumstances in which I was placed during a very long minority, as I was preserved by the care of watchful guardians from the dangers to which you have been exposed, and to which I also might have yielded, and am consequently enabled to rescue from his embarrassments a very amiable young man."

The delicacy of Lord Shirley was not lost upon his new friend, who seizing his hand burst into a passionate flood of tears.

Lord Shirley continued thus: "The accumulations of my minority were in themselves a fortune, and they have continued

to

to accumulate, being appropriated to any urgent and particular demands for myself or others;—and how can I employ them better, than in preserving you from a jail, and, what is worse, from a degrading vice, and its pernicious consequences? I flatter myself that when I know the amount of your debts, I can discharge them, making myself your sole creditor, and the estates that remain to you shall be the security for my re-payment.”

“You my sole creditor! No, that would be too great happiness! but it is impossible!”

“I hope it is not at all impossible; but that I shall see, if you will empower me to talk with your lawyer;—and the next thing to be done is to talk with your mistress.”

“What, would you undertake that for me too? Oh, my dear fellow! that would indeed be a kindness.”

“To be sure I will, especially after the pretty compliments which you have paid me on my insinuating powers ; for I declare you have made me impatient to employ them, and you will confer an obligation on me by putting it in my power to exert them directly.”

Again was Lord Livesay completely subdued by the generosity of his new friend. But they were summoned to breakfast, and he was forced to struggle with his feelings.

As soon as breakfast was over, which was distinguished on the young earl's side by the most marked and respectful attention to Lucy, the general begged leave to speak with Lord Livesay in his study.— He there went over much the same ground as Lord Shirley, and ended by the same liberal offers of service, if he could in any way serve him.

Lord Livesay listened with a heart almost

most bursting with gratitude. "Into what a family of angels has my good fortune thrown me!" he exclaimed. "And when he was able to speak, he told the general that his kindness was rendered needless by the liberal offer of his noble nephew."

It was now settled that the two earls should go directly to London, and put every thing in train immediately: Lord Livesay being desired to consider either New Street or Hampton as his home, till his own affairs were settled and his lady disposed of.

"My lord," said Lord Shirley, as they rode to London, "you know not what good you have done me, by allowing me to serve you;—believe me, the obligation is all on my side. I have known such a course of uninterrupted prosperity, that I have lived in terror of having that hardness of heart which belongs so often to the prosperous; but you have enabled

me to convince myself that prosperity has not rendered me callous to the sufferings of others, and I am cheered by the consciousness."

"I cannot reward you for your goodness," replied Lord Livesay; "but I trust there is one who can.—But what will your future wife say, whoever she may be, to your advancing so much money for an extravagant profligate like myself?"

"Livesay, I could never love or marry a mean or selfish woman. My future wife must be a woman capable of being a rigid œconomist from necessity and duty, but open-hearted and open-handed from inclination; and to no other woman than the one I have described can my heart ever be prevailed on to do homage."

Lord Livesay knew that noble heart was already devoted; but he was too delicate to hint at his knowledge: most fervently however did he pray that the attachment



ment of Lord Shirley might prove as fortunate and successful as it was well founded and deeply felt.

Lord Livesay had desired the general to inform Catherine of Lord Shirley's generous conduct ; and he took the earliest opportunity to assure her that the earl's liberality had left him nothing to do. But though Catherine was pleased to hear that her noble relation had acted thus, the general thought that she did not betray that strong emotion which a woman who loved a man would have felt on such an occasion ; and he feared his hopes of a union between the earl and his heiress, the two persons whom he loved the best on earth, was as far off as ever.

But however gratified Catherine might be by Lord Shirley's undertaking to settle the affairs of the young earl, she was by no means delighted at the unavoidable

able absence from Hampton which these affairs induced, in spite of the occasional calls of Melvyn, and his meetings with her and Lucy by accident in their walks : and Catherine felt it an increase of her uncomfortableness, that whenever Lord Shirley did contrive to steal down to Hampton, he always met Melvyn at the house, coming away from it, or on the common. These rencontres had always a visible effect on the temper of the earl, and therefore they took away from the pleasure which his visits would otherwise have imparted.

At length Lord Livesay's debts were paid ; his mistress was prevailed upon to leave him, in consideration of a certain sum of money ; and the young earl was nearly wild with joy and gratitude at being freed from two such burthens at once : and in the meanwhile he had never  
once

once been intoxicated; but Lord Shirley had the satisfaction of seeing that his habit of drinking had its origin entirely in uneasiness of mind, and that with the cause there was no doubt but the effect would cease for ever.

## CHAPTER V.

LORD Shirley was now at liberty to put his own plans in execution, and leave England on his long projected tour to the British Isles, whence he had some thoughts of joining our armies as a volunteer, as soon as he had resigned his militia command: and the frequency of Melvyn's visits to Hampton, whither it was impossible he should come so often if he was not sure of being welcomed with cordiality, confirmed his convictions of Catherine's indifference to him and preference of Melvyn. "My departure then is certain," said he to himself, "and if she marries Melvyn I know not when I shall have the courage to return!"

The general and Lucy as well as Catherine observed, on the day when these thoughts

thoughts were passing in Lord Shirley's mind, that he was unusually gloomy : and while, as usual, the friends sung together that evening, and Catherine accompanied herself on the lute, in the little song to a Scotch tune of " Here's a health to those far away," Lord Shirley was so strongly affected, that he evidently turned aside to conceal a starting tear ; and before the usual hour for retiring, he pleaded a bad headache as an excuse for leaving them early.

This singular conduct, and this unusual indisposition, awakened the fears of those whom he left for the health of Lord Shirley ; as they were certain he would not have gone to bed so soon, had he not felt very unwell. " Still, his complaint seems to me more of the mind than the body," said the general : " and perhaps we shall know to-morrow what ails him."

The next morning Lord Shirley seemed as usual, except that he evidently tried to

appear extremely gay. After breakfast he asked if any of them had commands to Scotland, for he was going to set off the next morning.

“To Scotland!” cried the general. “And pray, Lionel, how long shall you be gone?”

“Oh! I cannot tell; but not less than two or three years.”

“Years!” faintly articulated Catherine.

“Yes, I mean to go the tour of the British Isles; and then perhaps I shall join our armies somewhere as a volunteer.”

“What!” cried Catherine rising, “are you going to tread in the steps of my father? perhaps to perish like him!” Then bursting into tears she suddenly left the room, and Lucy followed her.

“Shirley, you must not go,” said the general, “you see you must not go, and that

that there is no reason for your going— Have those tears their origin in indifference?”

“ My dear general, those tears flowed only at the remembrance of her father, and her parting with him to go the same tour, and share in equal though not similar dangers. Could I but flatter myself I was mistaken, and that I had a chance of being beloved !”

“ I believe you are a blind and obstinate puppy,” said the general : “ but I will go and see after this obdurate young person.”

He found Catherine much agitated, and the more so because she was alarmed at and ashamed of her own agitation.— “ So, Shirley is bent on leaving us, my dear !” said he.

“ Yes, it is my poor father over again,” cried Catherine ; “ and it reminded me so forcibly of past scenes, that I could not bear

bear it ;—and just so, after breakfast one day, did he declare his designs to me.”

“ I don’t wonder then you were so affected,” replied the general ; while looking at Lucy he saw an arch and meaning smile playing about her lips.

Catherine had gone no further than the next room, and there she had requested Lucy to leave her to recover herself alone, but in vain. However, when the general said as he left her that he thought she would recover sooner by herself, Lucy took the hint and followed him.

“ My dear,” said the general to Lucy, “ you and I have more sense and discernment a great deal than these young people ; there is that silly girl fancying she is crying for her father, when she is weeping because Lionel is going away ; and there is Lionel fool enough to believe her. But you, I see, are as wise as I am.”

“ I hope we are as wise as we think ourselves,”



ourselves," replied Lucy ; " and I wish we could communicate our wisdom to others."

" Well, well ! I hope we are so,—there's a good girl, leave me alone with Lionel."

The general now returned to the earl, and found him pacing the room as if in great mental anxiety.

" How—how is Miss Shirley ?"

" Why, weeping and wailing, and all for my poor son."

" You think it is all for him ?"

" No, she thinks so herself ; but, zounds, Lord Shirley, I cannot bear this policy any longer : try your fate at once like a man ; if she is worth having, she is worth wooing ; and if your pride is such that you cannot bear to risk a refusal, then leave Catherine to be obtained by Melvyn, a man who has more love than pride."

" Gene-

“General,” cried Lord Shirley, “I am not now withheld by any such unworthy motive; and if you will promise me not to be angry if Miss Shirley refuses me, or to influence her to accept me, I will try my fate instantly.”

“I chide or influence Catherine!—I! Chide her I cannot do, I love her too well; and influence her I would not, if I could; because I am sure, whatever her decision is, that decision is formed on good grounds.—Well, and so you will venture, will you?”

“Yes,—have the goodness to ask an interview of her in my name.”

“I will.”

The general then returned to Catherine, who was only just beginning to recover her composure, after a serious examination of her own feelings, and a great deal of self-reproach for having allowed herself, from the representations of Lucy,

to

to fancy that Lord Shirley loved her, and for having allowed herself, in consequence of that idea, to feel more interest in him, and more pleasure in his society, than she thought consistent with female delicacy. Still she was not prepared, in spite of this serious communion with her own thoughts, for the general's artful communication.

“My dear,” said he, “this Lionel is a comical fellow, and I verily believe he will never return to us again, unless the woman he loves sends for him to come and marry her.”

“How, sir?” cried Catherine, turning pale, “is Lord Shirley in love, and likely to be married? ’Tis strange surely, very strange, we—that is—I should not know it; I think it unkind. And sinking on a chair, she trembled with uncontrollable emotion.

“Why—no, my dear, I did not tell  
you

you absolutely that he was going to be married ; but for all that, I think his wedding-day not far distant :—but he will tell you more himself.”

“ No, sir,” cried Catherine rising ; “ I do not like such tardy confidence.”

“ Nor I—and I always told him he should have been more open earlier ; but young men are so obstinate ! However, he must see you, and he demands a private audience.”

Lord Shirley meanwhile could no longer endure the state of suspense that he was in, but came, unsent for, into the room. Catherine sat down, rose, sat down again, in a most pitiable state of feelings : but seeing the general leave her alone with Lord Shirley, retiring as he did so with a low bow to each, and a very arch smile on his mouth, she began to suspect the truth, and was a little prepared for the declaration that followed.

But

“But why detail a love scene? that most foolish often, but at the same time the most happy of scenes! Suffice it, that Catherine owned a well-founded regard for her noble relation, and gave a ready consent to become his wife as soon as circumstances admitted.—Still Lord Shirley thought her manner cold, and that it did not bespeak affection at all equal to his own.

“Unreasonable being!” replied Catherine smiling; “believe me, when it is my duty to show you the extent of my love, you will have no reason to doubt it.”

“Duty! must I owe it only to your sense of duty?”

“Oh! dear Lord Shirley,” replied Catherine, “be not so mistaken as to wish any power more potent over your wife than a sense of duty.”

Lord

Lord Shirley tried to be satisfied, and led her in triumph to the anxious grandfather and anxious friend :—when the general declared every wish of his heart would now be accomplished, and he should go to his grave in peace.

Catherine that day, during a long and undisturbed tête-a-tête, convinced Lord Shirley, that though it was very probable, if she had never known him, she might have been charmed by the graces of Melvyn's manners and the captivating power of his conversation; yet long before she saw him first at court, she had admired her cousin Lord Shirley with an exclusive admiration, which, though not love, would have prevented her from feeling that passion for any other man.

It is easy to believe what we wish : and Lord Shirley was happy for the first time during many months. Still he would  
have

have been better pleased if Catherine had not bestowed such warm—nay, he thought, such extravagant praise on the graces and charms of Melvyn.

“However, I need not ask him to my house,” thought the earl.

## CHAPTER VI.

NOR were the pert pleasantries which, in the fulness of her heart, the delighted Lucy indulged herself on this occasion, at all likely to banish from Lord Shirley's mind the uncomfortable feelings with respect to Melvyn which had so long held possession of it.

"After all, my lord," said Lucy that day after dinner, "some of your success is, I believe, owing to my high veneration for you ; for even Miss Shirley felt convinced that the nobleman's merit must indeed be great, who had power to make a wild theoretical girl, like myself, his devoted admirer. Besides, I always contrived to keep you before her mind's eye, in order to drive away impertinent and improper intruders."

"Improper



“ Improper intruders ! ”

“ Yes—Mr. Melvyn for instance. If Miss Shirley talked of him, I talked of you—If she praised his elegance, I praised your handsomeness—If she admired his wit, I admired your fine sense.”

“ Then she did talk of Melvyn, and did praise him ? ”

“ O yes, my lord ; and I was once very much afraid that you might remain silent too long.”

“ What impossible slanders are these you are uttering of Miss Shirley ? ” said the general rather angrily, seeing Lord Shirley turn very pale. “ If Catherine really spoke of Melvyn oftener than of Lionel, and praised him more, it was a sign she loved him less ; and as to her having ever thought of him as a husband, that I am sure could never be.—But why do you not defend yourself, child ? ”

“ Because I did not think it necessary.

I could

I could not suppose you would not see that Lucy's high spirits were venting themselves in jokes, which, as she meant nothing by them, she fancied would be considered as harmless by others."

"Why, that is true, my dear; and I dare say you are right, as you always are." But Lord Shirley said nothing; for jokes on this subject to him were like vitriol applied to a yet green wound; and he would have given half his possessions to have been sure, that though Catherine esteemed, respected, and admired him most, and felt him the most proper husband for her in every point of view, her heart and her fancy did not prefer Melvyn. Jokes are like sky-rockets, which, though they are meant only to amuse, yet are often, according to the place or object on which they light, the cause of mischief and of pain, if not of destruction.

The

The general saw and understood the earl's feelings, and resolved that the ill-omened presence of Melvyn at Hampton, as it now seemed to him, should not again overcloud the now lightened brow of Lord Shirley. He therefore went out and gave secret orders to the servants, to say, if Mr. Melvyn called, that they were not at home.—Lord Shirley and Catherine had both requested that their engagement should not be made known to the family for two or three days at least, that they might avoid as long as possible the trouble and annoyance of letters and visits of congratulation. The secret, therefore, was imparted only to Lord Livesay when he came thenext morning to breakfast. He heard it with the most unaffected joy, and declared that this, and almost this alone, had been wanting to his entire felicity. He heaved a deep sigh as he uttered this “almost,”

most," and soon after begged to see the earl alone.

"My dear lord," said he, "you know you advised me to marry, in order to prevent my having the weakness to form another connexion as disgraceful and immoral as my last; and I am inclined to take your advice."

"I am glad to hear it—and the sooner the better."

"Yes—but perhaps the woman I could love may not like me, and may not suit me; for, to be honest, it is my wish to pay my addresses to Miss Merle."

Lord Shirley started at hearing this, and walked rapidly across the room, his whole face crimsoned with strong emotion! Then Lucy, the humble friend of his future bride, might be and perhaps would be a countess! and the intimacy which his pride often disapproved, would be sanctioned  
by

by equality of rank ! It was a tempting and a pleasant prospect ; and a word from him would make the young earl persevere in his design, and Lucy's prejudices and indifference would perhaps vanish before the splendour offered to her acceptance. But the triumph of self-interest over honour and integrity could never be more than transient in the bosom of Lord Shirley ; and regardless of his own gratification, he resolved to consider nothing but Lord Livesay's good.

“ My dear lord,” said he, “ you are not in love with Miss Merle yet, though I see very clearly that you soon would be ; therefore, it is my earnest advice to you that you see as little of her as possible, and travel, or look out for some more proper object of pursuit, directly.”

“ Proper !”

“ Yes—remember I said proper, not deserving ; for a more deserving creature

than Lucy Merle exists not, in one sense of the word ; and for my own and Catherine's sake, to see her elevated to the rank of a peeress is so pleasant a prospect, that it requires all my sense of duty to you to enable me to resist it. But imperious integrity bids me say that such an unequal match as this would in all probability turn out ill ; for she has a vulgar vixenish mother, and still more vulgar relations."

" But I do not marry them, and need not be troubled with them."

" Aye ! but Lucy Merle is a being strongly attached to her duties ;—and could you wish your wife to violate her duty ? If she is inclined to fail, or you make her fail, in the first duty she was taught to perform, that of loving and honouring a parent, and respecting the ties of kindred, where is your security that she will not learn to fail in her duty  
to

to her husband? And would she not be lowered in your esteem, if she were ready to give up, however vulgar and unsuitable they might be, the playmates of infancy and the being that bore her in her bosom? She would be like a tree in Holland, whose stem is painted, and exhibits a bright and gaudy colour to the eye, while its natural, humbler-coloured but more becoming bark is destroyed, and its healthy juices are unwholesomely forbidden to exude."

"But if she loved me, I should be all to her, and she would not feel the loss of other ties."

"But are we not enjoined to honour our father and our mother? and cutting their acquaintance seems to me a singular way of fulfilling the commandment. And there is another obstacle to your union with Miss Merle, which will perhaps weigh more with you than all my arguments—

namely, that I believe she would decidedly reject your suit ; for she has imbibed certain notions of republicanism and so forth, which in her are not mere declamation, but which would, I am convinced, influence her actions. She is raving about America and clearing lands ; and her first ambition is to marry some American settler, and enjoy the delight of living under a republican form of government."

" But perhaps the temptation of a present visible coronet and noble husband, would be more to her than an unseen and distant republican one ; and then, when once married and a countess, she would naturally give up opinions that had a tendency to upset and annihilate the rank to which she was elevated."

" Very likely the old proverb of ' The grapes are sour ' may apply here ; and the republican hater of titles, when titled, might cease in her heart to be a republican."

" But



“ But Lucy has talents, and spirit, and some pleasure in displaying both: therefore, from the pride of showing that rank had not changed her opinions, and that, such was her disinterested virtue, she still disliked that rank which she was enjoying, it is very likely that your lordship might have the satisfaction of hearing your countess at your own table pronouncing an eloquent panegyric on the natural equality of man; and leading you a weary life if you would not invite to your house all the leaders of the party denominated the low party in this country.—How would you like to hear your wife exclaim ‘ A lord, when to a man compared, is but a man!’ and indulge in these stale quotations, *alias* trueisms, in return for the honour to which you had raised her? However, all these fears may be visionary, and the strong mind of Lucy might teach her more conformity to the decorum of  
her

her situation : but the objections founded on the vulgarity of her connexions; and the absolute necessity you would be under of making them occasionally your associates, or cut the ties of blood asunder, checking if not destroying in your wife those natural and sweet affections which make the charm of woman, these are real and unremovable : and if you hesitate any longer, I will take you to call on Mrs. Merle directly, and see if I cannot also present you to cousin Dorothy and cousin Bridget."

" I see you are right," said Lord Livesay with a deep sigh ; " but she is monstrously handsome ! aye, and attractive too."

" She is so, and so are many women in your own rank of life ; and you must own you are not sufficiently in love to make her absolutely necessary to your happiness ; without which necessity, and conviction,

viction, neither man nor woman ought to marry."

"No—but I soon should be ; and with a little encouragement I could be up to the chin in love."

"Then fly, while you are only ankle deep ; and I am sure you will live to thank me for my wholesome and disinterested advice."

"Well, well, I will—But surely you will let me stay dinner?"

"By no means—the indulgence can do no good, and may do harm."

"Well then, I will go : you have acquired a right to govern even my feelings."

"Pshaw ! I disown all such right : if I influence you, let it be by your affection for me."

"Shirley !" cried Lord Livesay squeezing his hand affectionately, "it is my first wish to live to show my gratitude to you  
by

by some means in my power, and then I do think I should die contented."

"You know I hate this sort of conversation: but if your gratitude be such a troublesome weight to you, you may relieve yourself a little by granting me one request; namely, leave to tell Lucy this conversation; for I shall not be easy in mind till I have imparted it to her."

"But she will despise me for having allowed myself to be talked out of my love."

"No—she is not a common-minded woman; and she will respect you for having been able to listen to reason:—do, therefore, let me communicate to her such parts of the conversation as I can relate with propriety; for, if I did not do thus, I should feel as if I had acted an underhand and a treacherous part."

"Well, well, do as you please," replied the young earl. And they returned to the ladies,

ladies, to whom Lord Livesay expressed his sorrow for being obliged to go to town directly. Then affectionately shaking Catherine's hand, and raising his eyes tenderly and mournfully to Lucy's face, as if conscious he was gazing on her for the last time, he said faintly, "God bless you, my dear Miss Merle!" and ran out of the house. Lord Shirley followed him to the stables, where, to shorten his trial, he had chosen to mount, and was convinced how wise he had been in advising his instant departure, by seeing the agitation which the poor youth felt at having gazed his last on the woman whom prudence forbade him to marry.

"I wonder what ailed the little peer!" said Lucy: "his farewell to me was almost tender."

"Quite tender, I think," replied Catherine smiling; "and who knows what your bright eyes may have done? Who

knows but he may come and lay his coronet at your feet?"

"I wish he might!" cried Lucy with great fervour.

"Indeed!"

"Yes; that I might show the triumph of principle over vanity, and prove my contempt of titles not a mere declamation, but the well-founded sentiment of my head and heart."

"That you might show, I think, on the contrary," replied Catherine, "the triumph of republican pride over woman's gentler feelings, over pity and humanity;—for why should you wish this poor youth to pine for you in a hopeless passion, in order to give you an opportunity of displaying the heartless triumph of a politician? Oh, fye, Lucy! where is your generosity, where is your christianity?"

"Lost, eclipsed, annihilated, for the moment, I own, in a base and sordid selfishness ;

ishness ; and I am ashamed of myself ; however, it is past, and ‘ Richard’s himself again.’ But hither comes Lord Shirley.”

As soon as he entered, with some archness, but more embarrassment of manner, he began to ask Lucy if it were possible for him to bribe over to the cause of the aristocracy so formidable a foe to it as herself, by the offer of making her a countess.

“ No,” replied Lucy firmly, yet laughing and blushing as she spoke, for she thought the earl was not joking only—  
 “ No ; you cannot make me a countess yourself, and you are the only earl who could be worthy the surrender of my principles and my consistency.”

“ I am glad to hear it,” said the earl ;  
 “ for now my mind is easy ; as I have to own to you, Miss Merle, that Lord Livesay, but for my representations, would have nourished his partiality into a  
 violent

violent passion, and was on the point of paying his addresses to you."

"And you prevented him, Shirley! How unkind!"

"No, my dearest Catherine, not so; I trust I have been only just and honourable; for it would have gratified my feelings excessively to have seen our friend elevated to a rank which she was formed to adorn."

"Lord Shirley," said Lucy, a tear of strong emotion glittering in her eye, "I am prouder of that tribute of praise and friendship from you, than I should have ever been of wearing your friend's coronet.—But pray explain to me this noble daring of the young earl.—Ah! I see he has profited by the wise lines in Hudibras—'He who fights and runs away may live to fight another day.'—And so it was fear of me that drove him away!—Well, it is better as it is; for, if I had been a countess,



countess, murder would have been the consequence, for the honourable Mrs. Baynton would have died of it!"

"Hush, hush! Spare my aunt, I desire. But how well she behaves!—does she not, Shirley?"

"To be sure I have to make the *amende honorable*; for you know I behaved ill enough just now, and I will tell tales of myself when the earl has set me the example."

Lord Shirley then related what had passed, omitting only his description of Lucy's mother; for he owned the manner in which he had described her as likely to harangue at her own table; and Lucy declared she liked herself better at second-hand than she thought she should.

When Lord Shirley had ended, Lucy gravely told him, she was excessively obliged to him, and she rejoiced at all he had done, because she felt that she could not  
have

have returned the affection with which Lord Livesay had honoured her, even if her repugnance to marriage could be conquered; and that she should have been sorry indeed to have occasioned that terrible misery—a hopeless attachment. And Lord Shirley had not only the satisfactory consciousness of having acted right, but of having his motives properly appreciated by one of the persons most interested in their result.

The general was also let into the secret; and he, like Catherine, was mortified at first that the elevation of his young favourite was not to take place. While this conversation was passing, Melvyn had called and been denied; and he suspected by the servant's manner that the family were at home.—Excessive self-love converts even affronts into proofs of regard; and Melvyn hoped they were at home and denied, because he thought it a proof that  
that

that Lord Shirley's jealousy had influenced the general to act thus. However, he resolved to call again ; and he did so the next day. Now then the case was clear : he saw the general sitting reading in his study, and still he was denied to him. "Poor Miss Shirley!" thought he, "at least I will give her the power of choice : they shall not force her cousin on her acceptance, if she really prefers me, as I suspect she does." And as soon as he returned to town he wrote a letter to Catherine, which began by complaining that he was not allowed to see her, and finished by offering her, though very humbly, his hand and heart.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE general was with Catherine when she received this letter, and in the first moment of her astonishment she exclaimed—"Here is a letter from Mr. Melvyn! How strange!"

"Strange indeed, child!" cried the general, laying down his spectacles: "What should he write to you about?" But perceiving her covered with blushes, he suspected the truth. "So so," said he, "I suppose it is an offer of marriage, is it not?"

"I can't—can't say it is not," replied Catherine hesitating.

"Come, let me judge for myself, child!"

"Is

“Is it right to show such things?”

“Perfectly so, surely, to a grandfather, and necessary to be shown to an accepted lover, especially one with whom from his nature you ought to be particularly open.”

“Particularly open! I am sorry for it,” said Catherine sighing, and giving him the letter with reluctance.

“Upon my word, a very humble modest letter as may be! But, Catherine, Shirley must know of this.” Then without awaiting her answer he went in search of the earl.

“Here, Lionel,” said he, (not seeing Lucy Merle was in the room,) “Here is an offer of marriage from Melvyn to Catherine. It is a pity, is it not, that it did not come before, to give her an opportunity of making her election between you?”

“You

“ You are laughing, general : but I am in earnest when I say that I sincerely wish it had. But how has Catherine answered it ? ”

The general turning round now saw Lucy Merle. “ My dear,” said he, “ you ought not to have known of this : it is indelicate to mention such things, except where it is unavoidable : but I know you are discreet, and can keep a secret.”

“ And so,” cried Lucy, “ he has really offered to her ? I wish I might answer the letter.”

“ I should like to see how you would do it,” said Lord Shirley. “ General, surely, as she knows of the offer; she may see the manner in which it was made ? ”

And Lucy read the letter—

“ I would answer it thus,” said she, sitting down and writing :—

“ Sir,

“ Sir,

“ Under no possible circumstances could I have had the power or inclination to accept the offer you have made me.

“ CATHERINE SHIRLEY.”

Catherine entered the drawing-room just as this letter was reading; and in a degree of almost indignant perturbation desired to know to what that letter was an answer.

The question remained unanswered, for a certain degree of shame kept her auditors silent : and Catherine continued, “ If this letter be intended as an answer to one I have received, and which ought not to have been thus canvassed, I pronounce it to be improper and unfeeling; and I also declare that I will allow no one but myself to answer the letter in question.” So saying, she took up her letter

letter which lay on the table, and before any one spoke she had disappeared.

“She is quite right,” said the general, “and we are wrong.”

Lord Shirley did not speak; but he covered his face with his hands, for there was a severe struggle between his sense of right and his jealousy. Lucy Merle’s short and unfeeling reply to Melvyn’s offer had flattered and soothed his jealousy: Catherine’s reprobation of that reply had irritated it. Still, he knew that she was right and Lucy wrong; while Lucy, confounded at having incurred the evident displeasure of her friend, avowedly went in search of her, to humble herself before her. But she sought her in vain below stairs; and when she knocked at her door up stairs, she was informed that she was busy, and could not see her yet.

Perhaps there are few things more appalling



palling than the displeasure on principle of an habitually mild, forgiving, and fine-tempered being—it seems to throw such deep shade of blame on the offender! for, how strong and how just must the provocation be, that can call forth the expression of resentment from a creature meek from nature, and still more so from principle! Lucy did not know how to endure this proof of Catherine's indignation; and rushing down stairs she burst into the room where the gentlemen were, saying, “She is so angry, she will not see me!”

This unusual indulgence of anger in a being so gentle as Catherine, was not heard by Lord Shirley without very painful sensations; for it was a proof how strongly she resented any thing disrespectful to his rival Melvyn; and an agonizing suspicion withered the blossoms of his successful love. But while they were  
thinking

thinking over in uneasy silence this unwonted conduct in Catherine, she entered with all the calm dignity in her manner indicative of a mind at ease with itself, and her first words apologized to Lucy for not having admitted her. "The truth was," said she, "I was writing my answer to Mr. Melvyn, and I did not like to be interrupted."

"It was an important task, no doubt," observed Lord Shirley.

"It was," answered Catherine. "When a man has paid a woman the greatest compliment any man can pay her, namely, expressed his willingness to trust his happiness in her hands, he has a right to expect civility at least, though expressed in such guarded language as wholly to preclude hope. To tell Mr. Melvyn that I was already engaged to you, my dear lord, before either my aunt or your own family are acquainted with our engagement,

ment, would have been improper in the highest degree: nor could I have mentioned it even had the case been different; because it would have seemed like giving that engagement as the reason of my refusal, and not the rejecting sentiments of my heart."

"True, very true," said the general and Lucy both at once.

"Then, how did you word your refusal?—Is it gone?" asked Lord Shirley eagerly.

"It is."

"My dear girl," cried the general, "we should not have objected, I am sure, to whatever you thought proper to write; but I hope you can show us a copy of your answer."

"No doubt; and I hope you will own that my answer, though sent without your approbation, is not wholly unworthy of it."

it." So saying, she presented it to them, and it was as follows:—

"Sir,

"I beg leave to thank you, very respectfully, for the obliging intentions and flattering wishes expressed in the letter which I have had the honour to receive from you; but I must at the same time assure you that it is equally out of my *power*, as my *inclination*, to grant you such a return as you solicit; and that I never can be more to you than

Your sincere well-wisher and obliged  
humble servant,

"CATHERINE SHIRLEY."

"And pray were certain words scored in the original, as these are?" asked Lord Shirley.

"Certainly."

"Well then, I have generosity enough  
to

to pity Melvyn." But Lord Shirley still repined in his heart at the tenderness of feeling towards Melvyn, as he thought it, which had made Catherine angry with her friend; and that decision of character, which had led her to write and send her refusal without showing it even to the general.

"I always thought, early in our acquaintance," said he to himself, "that she had great independence and proud decision of character; no desirable qualities in a wife:—but then they are counterbalanced by so many virtues!"

Lord Shirley was right in considering Melvyn as an object of pity when he received Catherine's answer. For he was a libertine, loving for the first time in his life; and Catherine's timid manner in his presence, united to Lord Shirley's jealousy, had really given him strong hopes that his affection was returned.

But there was nothing in her letter for even his vanity to hang a hope upon; and he who heretofore had never sighed in vain, was not only a rejected lover, but had put it in the power of the proud Shirleys to represent him as such. But if they did so represent him, he was resolved to deny the fact; and by looks, and nods, and winks,—a language he was completely master of,—he resolved to insinuate that, if he had been inclined to try his fortune with Miss Shirley, he should certainly have succeeded.

“I think,” said the general two days after this happened, “that I have indulged your whims long enough, and that etiquette demands I should write to my sister, and you to yours, Lionel, and so on to those who have a right to expect such a communication.”

The earl and Catherine reluctantly assented to the necessity: and accordingly they

they both wrote whatever letters they judged necessary.

The letters of the sisters, who were both settled in Scotland, were cold but civil; and Mrs. Baynton's was very like herself, for it was as follows :

“DEAR BROTHER,

“I congratulate you on Miss Shirley's great good luck : she is the most fortunate of her sex; and I sincerely hope she will do nothing to disgrace the high situation and the noble husband she has so unexpectedly obtained :—I say unexpectedly, for I had no doubt but that she would have taken up with Melvyn,—and in such things I have a sharp discerning eye,—but I conclude she has thought better of it. I intend to pay my compliments to you in form to-morrow, but shall return at night. I suppose, brother, now you are going to lose your idol, you will want me to come

back to you, in order to resume the management of your house ; but I beg leave to inform you that I am going to assume the government of a house of my own, and shall no longer require the protection of a brother.

“ Your affectionate sister,

“ JANE BAYNTON.”

“ This is a very strange letter,” said the general : “ I protest I believe the old lady is going to be married,—though as to requiring my protection no longer, I have thought she had no need of it these five-and-thirty years.—My poor child ! it is evident she is wounded, not pleased, at your happy prospects ; and I dare say in her heart she is sorry you did not marry Melvyn.”

“ I am sure, sir,” said Catherine, “ you misjudge my poor aunt. But let me read the letter myself.” And when read, not even



even Catherine's charity could form a favourable judgement of the heart and spirit of the writer.

"Forgive my freedom," cried Lucy ; "but I must say that, if I too had been going to be a countess, I much fear that the coroner's inquest would be now sitting in New Street."

Mrs. Baynton did come to dinner the next day ; and when she coldly saluted and congratulated Catherine, she turned her cheek to the earl, and he was obliged to touch it with his unwilling lips ; but she scarcely deigned to notice Lucy.

"So," said she, "good people," when the servants had left the room after dinner, "though you have been so much out of the world, you have not been unnoticed by it, I can tell you ; and a most ridiculous report has been in circulation, namely, that the Earls Shirley and Livesay were going to lead to the altar Miss Shirley

ley and her friend Miss Merle. For my part, I believed both reports equally false, but one I was sure was unfounded. Silly and drunken and profligate as the poor Lord Livesay is, I did not think him likely to marry in that way ; but I thought it probable that he might admire and follow Miss Merle. I am told, Lord Shirley, he has turned off an old mistress that he had, — is that true ?”

“I make it a point never to allude to arrangements of this nature, in the company of young and modest women,” replied Lord Shirley, resenting this malignant attack on Lucy ; “but if you will favour me with a private conference, I shall be happy to give you any information on the subject that you may require.” Mrs. Baynton bit her lip, and was sulky and silent directly. “But,” continued he, “I have something to say relative to the report, which you so confidently denied,

nied,

nied, Mrs. Baynton; namely, that I am convinced in my own mind, if my friend Lucy had smiled in the slightest degree on the young earl, she would have had him at her feet, coronet and all."

"And so am I"—"And so am I," said the general and Catherine.

"Well, you are mighty credulous," replied Mrs. Baynton; "and I really believe that young person has bitten you with her democracy, for you do not seem at all shocked at the idea of such a mis-alliance."

"Oh! *à-propos* of alliances:—Mrs. Baynton, are you about to form an alliance yourself," asked the general, "for your letter seems to imply as much?"

Mrs. Baynton changed colour, fanned herself, looked important, simpered, drew up, frowned; and at length said,  
"Brother,

“Brother, I am arrived at years of discretion, and—”

“Yes,” interrupted the general, “long enough to have survived them, I fear.”

“You may be as sarcastic as you please, General Shirley ; but I have an independent fortune, and I have a right to do what I please with it : therefore, I must trouble you not to distress yourself needlessly about my concerns. You may depend upon it when I marry (and here she forced a laugh) you shall have wedding favours, not excepting Miss Merle.”

“The first and last favour, madam,” said Lucy, “I have ever received or shall receive from you ; and I shall value it accordingly.”

“Take care, take care, sister, that your choice is such as not to make your wedding favours too strikingly typical of your bridegroom’s smiles,—bright, but transient

ient in the duration of their brightness ; and worn in public for a week, then thrown aside and visible no more."

" Very fanciful and pretty indeed ;—but really it would be more agreeable to me if you would call another subject. Pray what are the usual amusements at Hampton? besides reading sermons and praying, I mean."

" Oh, various !" answered the general, looking steadily at her ; " and, strange to say, we contrive to kill time here without slandering our neighbours, repeating impertinent reports, or saying rude or severe things of people or to them. Then, having thus passed the day, we think we may venture to close it, if so inclined, with prayer, and preaching too if we like it, because we humbly hope that to preaching we have joined practice."

" You have practised preaching I see very clearly, and really have made a great  
 1 5 progress

progress for the time, brother, he, he, he! But tell me, young ladies, is it one of the holy habits of Hampton to sit over the wine with the gentlemen? for it is getting very late, and I am going to an early party this evening." Catherine immediately rose, and the three ladies retired to the drawing-room.

"That foolish old woman has alarmed and vexed me much," said the general: "for, however provoking and odd, she is my sister, my only sister, after all: and changed as that face is now,—though she looks very well for her years,—it is one which I have looked upon all my life, and I should grieve to see those eyes not only dimmed by age, but also by tears wrung from them by ill usage."

"And why do you suppose she is likely to be exposed to it?"

"Oh, I am sure she has a matrimonial plan in her head; and I know her so well,  
that

that if I were to hint to her the necessity and precaution of having her own fortune settled on her, she would fancy I spoke from interested motives, and was afraid that I and Catherine should not be the better for it. I wish you could hint the propriety of such unromantic security to her."

"How can I, my dear sir, when I am going to marry your heiress, and hers if the law had to make her will?"

"True, true: but perhaps my fears are groundless:—but that new wig, and that additional tint of rouge, and that comical air, as if she was brooding over some pleasant secret, all combine to give me painful suspicions. However, sufficient to the day is the evil thereof:—And why should I damp my joy at the prospect of a marriage which is all my heart can wish, by the fear of one which may perhaps never take place?"

Mrs.

Mrs. Baynton, meanwhile, was showing off in the drawing-room ; and she talked so much of a Mr. Delaney, and repeated his sayings, and how he looked when such things were said, and so often mentioned him as having been her beau at this place and the other, that Lucy was convinced there was something particular between them, and she gravely asked her whether Mr. Delaney was an elderly gentleman.

“ Elderly? No indeed!” was the abrupt answer. And Lucy ventured to ask no more questions.

At length her carriage was announced, and Lord Shirley came to hand her to it.

“ Well, Jane—Good-night, God bless you!” said the general kissing her : “ and let me remind you, that should you ever need a protector and a home, while I live you are sure of both.”

The general could not say this unmoved :  
but



but Mrs. Baynton heard it so ; and muttering a “ Dear me, brother ! ” sprung youthfully into her chariot.

It was now their usual hour for music ; and the lute, the guitar, and voice of Catherine had always power to dispel the general’s gloom : and Mrs. Baynton and her strangeness were forgotten.

Two days afterwards, however, the general received a letter from his sister, signed “ Jane Delaney,” telling him she was married that morning to the man of her heart—a gentleman of ancient family and respectable fortune. The general was at first speechless with consternation ; for he knew Delaney to be a complete man of the town. True, he was of an ancient family ; but he had entirely dissipated his fortune, and no one knew how he lived, but it was supposed he lived by gambling : and though it was no wonder that De-  
laney

laney at the age of fifty should be looking out to recruit his finances by a wealthy marriage, still it was surprising, he thought, that his sister, to whom his character must have been well known, should have thus risked her fortune and her happiness.

“If she has not had her fortune so tied up that he can’t touch it, she is a ruined woman!” cried he. “And this secrecy convinces me that no settlements have been made ! Do, my dear lord, go to London, and try to find out whether my suspicions be just or not; and, if possible, contrive to make the best of what cannot be helped.”

The earl did so; and found on inquiry that his relation and her fortune also were both entirely at the mercy of a very dissipated man. On hearing this, Lord Shirley hesitated not a moment, but went to pay.

pay his compliments to the new-married pair, who had taken a house near Sheen.

After the first congratulations were over, he desired to see the grounds, which were extensive and well laid out : and as Mr. Delaney alone accompanied him, the earl delicately but firmly represented to him, that not having his wife's fortune settled on her, was full of injustice to her and danger to himself. "For you know," said he, "what your habits are ; and if there was money tied up which you could not play away, you would always have a resource left for yourself."

To be brief, Delaney was prevailed upon to let two-thirds of his wife's fortune be settled on her. But in order to effect this, Lord Shirley (exactng at the same time a solemn promise of secrecy) gave Mr. Delaney for his own use a considerable

siderable sum of money ; but one which his generous nature did not think too much to give, in order to benefit even an unamiable fellow-creature and relation.

It was now universally known that Lord Shirley and his beautiful cousin were soon to be united, and there were two persons who heard the news with the same feelings as beamed in the eyes of Milton's devil when he beheld our first parents in the garden of Eden :—but more of them hereafter. Let me now proceed to say, that as soon as the necessary preparations could be made, Lord Shirley received the hand of Catherine at Hampton church ; no one being present, according to her particular desire, but the general and her friend. The new married couple set off immediately on a tour of some length, and Lucy returned in a  
 very

very depressed state of mind to her home; for she feared, notwithstanding her confidence in Lord Shirley's regard, that the unrestrained intercourse which she had been wont to have with Catherine was now probably lost to her for ever.

## CHAPTER VIII.

LORD SHIRLEY seemed to have now attained the height of his wishes. He was in possession of the only woman whom he had ever loved, and that woman was a treasure of beauty, talents, virtue, and piety. Still there were moments when he was not quite happy. He felt that before he married he ought to have required from Catherine an explanation of that mystery, or that secret, which evidently at times had visibly affected her. Her strong emotion and faintness on the birthday were, he doubted not, caused by the occasional presence of some object, one too whom she feared he should encounter ;—and who and what was that object ? Has she loved, and loved hopelessly or unworthily, whispered jealousy :

jealousy : and at such moments Lord Shirley's feelings amounted almost to agony. But now, he did not like to require this explanation, partly because he was ashamed to show how long he had remembered the circumstance, and how suspicious it had made him ; and secondly, because, when he had hinted at it, however remotely, he saw Catherine assume a cold reserve of manner, which showed him that, if she had a secret, he would be degraded in her eyes by trying to discover it. Lord Shirley felt that before they married, when Catherine conditioned that she should be allowed to keep the Sabbath day as she chose, and not be obliged to have parties or go to parties on that day, he might have said, "I require in return that you should have no reserves from me." And if she had refused to explain the circumstance that distressed him, he might have

have declined marrying a woman who thought herself justified in having a secret undisclosed to her husband, and was likely therefore to make her husband uneasy : or he would have known on what conditions he was to marry her, and would have made up his mind to the consequences.

“ I think, Catherine,” said he to her one day on their journey, “ I have never seen any symptoms in you of similar seizures to those which you had on the birthday ? ”

At that moment Catherine stooped to pick up a brooch which she had dropt : and when she raised up her head again, she calmly replied, “ No, my dear lord, those seizures as you call them are not frequent with me.”

“ What should I call them then, if they were not seizures ? ”

“ It



“It is quite immaterial what name you give them,” she replied, fixing her eyes on his face, in which she saw an expression of most perturbed curiosity and suspicion; and she sighed with mortification and regret as she beheld it.

“The fourth of June is very near again; perhaps these attacks are yearly ones;—perhaps you may be so seized again?”

“Perhaps so,” replied Catherine; and evidently changed the conversation.

No man likes to own that he is either suspicious or jealous; therefore Lord Shirley dropped the subject without daring to speak plainer. But Catherine had seen and heard enough to lower the tone of her expectations, had her habitual piety allowed it to be too high. For, blest as she was in an union with a man whom she loved with all the chastised yet fervent

vent tenderness of a woman's lawful love, she saw that there were faults in his nature, which might call forth all her powers of patience and forbearance: "Yes," said Catherine in the solitude of her own room, "even in my brilliant and envied lot, there is enough to keep my convictions alive that this world is a state of probation, not of perfect happiness; and in the midst of my prosperity I 'rejoice with trembling.'"

When Lord and Lady Shirley returned from their tour, a severe trial awaited the affectionate heart of the latter,—and that was the approaching departure of Lucy Merle for America. Her mother was already on the eve of hers, having been sent for by her husband, who had lately been able to procure employment which promised him considerable emolument; and as Mrs. Merle was fondly devoted  
to

to him, she resolved to obey his summons instantly, leaving Lucy to settle her affairs, and follow her in another fleet.

Lucy, though she loved her father, was not sorry to remain in England a little longer, and at her own disposal. Her regret at leaving England was, however, lessened by the consciousness that Lady Shirley could not be to her what Catherine Shirley had been. Still she knew that, had she remained in England, she could have seen her whenever she wished it; if she was ill, she could have nursed her; if afflicted, she could have soothed her by participating in her sorrows:—and now the vast Atlantic was to roll between them! “But she will no longer want me,” thought the affectionate girl, and she tried to make the selfish yield to the benevolent feeling. It was, however, with grateful  
joy

joy that she received a note from the earl, informing her that as soon as her mother was sailed, he requested her to consider his house as her home for as long a time as it suited her to remain in England.

At length the day was fixed for Mrs. Merle to leave London; and Catherine, after sitting some time in serious abstraction, told Lord Shirley she was going as soon as she had breakfasted to take leave of Mrs. Merle.

“Then I will have the pleasure of accompanying you,” said the earl, “as I am always glad of an opportunity of showing my respect and regard to Miss Merle; and I know she is more pleased with attention to her mother than to herself.”

“Most kindly felt, and most kindly meant,” replied Catherine with some embarrassment of manner: “but I had rather go alone; and I will tell Mrs. Merle that

that I alone prevented your accompanying me."

"Rather go alone, Catherine!—That is a mortifying confession both to my self-love and my affection. What can there be in your adieu to Mrs. Merle which I may not witness?"

"Nothing in our adieu, certainly; for I shall not be so much overcome as to make you apprehensive for my life. However," she added after a pause, "if you wish to go, I shall be glad of your company."

"If I were like some men, I should refuse to go after your first refusal."

"But as there are few men like you, my dear Shirley, and you are formed to give, not take an example, I know you will go:" and Lord Shirley, pleased with the compliment, and incapable of acting from the dictates of pique, promised to profit by the permission which she gave.

Lucy's good feelings and her mother's weak ones were gratified by this visit from the earl ; and Mrs. Merle repeated her joy at seeing his lordship, and " how good it was in his lordship to call to bid her good bye," so often, that his lordship was almost sick of his title.—But it was not long before Catherine requested to see Mrs. Merle alone ; and Lucy, apologizing to Lord Shirley for leaving him, hastily followed her mother and Catherine.

" Then she had some private business with Mrs. Merle ?" thought Lord Shirley. " In vain do I try to conquer my suspicions : there certainly is some mystery hanging over her residence with the Merles !"

It was at least twenty minutes before Lucy returned to the room, and apologized in a fearful and hurried manner for Catherine's continued absence : but at length

length she herself appeared, followed by Mrs. Merle ; and her look was agitated, her cheek pale, while Mrs. Merle's countenance exhibited the traces of recent passion, and her cheeks were flushed with the crimson of strong emotion.

“ My dear lord,” said Catherine, “ I am ready to attend you directly.” And the earl rang for the carriage.

Till it was announced no word was spoken ; and when she rose to depart, Catherine coldly took Mrs. Merle's hand, and wished her health and happiness. Lord Shirley bowed at a distance, and echoed the good wishes, while Mrs. Merle with rather a haughty toss of her head wished them the same ; and Lucy, giving way to a violent burst of tears, rushed past them, and left the room.

As soon as they were in the carriage Catherine leant back, and, throwing her handkerchief over her face, gave way her-

self to tears, and so violently as to excite Lord Shirley's wonder, more than his sympathy.

"What can have overset you in this manner?" said he: "certainly not parting, though it be for ever, with that disagreeable woman; especially as I saw little cordiality in your last adieu."

"No; I am not suffering from grief for her departure," replied Catherine, "but from disappointment. I hoped before she went that she would have enabled me to do an act of justice, and she has refused to do it."

"What act of justice?" asked Lord Shirley anxiously.

"I cannot explain myself," answered Catherine: "and I conjure you, if you love me, to ask no further, but change the conversation."

"How strange, and how mysterious!" said the earl: "but so conjured, I must obey:



obey : yet I must beg you to remember, that if I am confiding you ought to be generous, and not impose a greater weight on the love and confidence of a husband than he can with propriety be expected to bear."

Catherine spoke not ; but looking at Lord Shirley with great tenderness, she pressed his hand affectionately between both hers, and some time before they reached Grosvenor Square Lord Shirley had yielded to her efforts to change the conversation.

I am now going to enter upon a very painful task. To take the mask from vice, and to exhibit both a man and woman under the influence of passions the most various and diabolical,—and leagued for the purposes of destroying the peace, and blackening the reputation, of that virtue that never even in thought purposely offended them, is a necessity from which,

which, while yielding to it, my inmost heart recoils; and I hope I may be allowed to hint at crimes, rather than detail them, in the course of the following narrative.

Sophia Clermont was the spoiled heiress of a weak unprincipled father. Her mother died early, and her father married again; but as his second wife had unfortunately no children, the little Sophia still remained a first object, and Mrs. Clermont took as much pains to spoil her as her father did. But I am weary of detailing the progress of ruin which is visible in the career of spoiled children; tempers uncorrected; passions unrestrained; and selfishness, the parent of callousness of heart, universally triumphant!

Sophia Clermont had great quickness of talents; and though misled by the bad examples of her father and her mother-in-law, she felt a most decided contempt

tempt for the beings whose vices had so corrupted her. She despised in the latter, a woman of impure conversation, of lax morality, and of idle habits ; and in the former she beheld a man by turns a tyrant and a driveller, the uxorious idolater of his wife and the frowning malevolent tyrant. The consequences of association with such a pair were only too natural :—the purity and innocence of her mind were destroyed by the wife and the moral restraints weakened, if not annihilated ; while the religious ones were utterly banished by the avowed scepticism of the husband.

Sophia Clermont's knowledge of evil was not long confined to theory only ; but good luck, and the confidence which she fearlessly and unblushingly placed in the parents who had prepared her young mind for guilt, saved her reputation from the danger that threatened it ; and when  
her

her father, and his wife were carried off by a bad fever, at little more than the middle stage of their existence, Miss Clermont appeared as a young and beautiful heiress in the world of fashion ; and spite of her manners, which were almost too seducing to be consistent with innate propriety, she was considered as an innocent woman, and no suspicion of her early frailty had ever reached the scenes in which she now moved. Year, however, succeeded to year, and still she was unmarried ; and though suitor succeeded to suitor, no one bore away the envied prize. Perhaps she did not yet feel for any one a passion strong enough to conquer the scruples which the consciousness of secret guilt might oppose to her marrying ; for I believe there can be few women so depraved, as not to shrink with a feeling of almost virtuous horror from the idea of giving to the honourable protection of a confiding husband,

band, a woman consciously stained with previous though secret criminality. Be that as it may, Sophia Clermont was still unmarried; and from the attractions of her person and countenance, and the seduction of her manners, was still the terror of wives and the envy of single women, when Lord Shirley first entered on his career of fashionable life, and was consequently ambitious of being known to the Isyren who had fascinated so many of his acquaintance.

The impression which each made on the other, though equal in strength, was different in its nature. Lord Shirley felt the full force of Sophia's power to charm as a mistress, but he felt not the slightest wish to secure her as his wife; and he therefore felt she was a woman to be shunned, for his honour and his principles prevented his wishing to become her seducer, and she was certainly not the sort

of woman to whom he wished to give his name and his rank.

Miss Clermont, on the contrary, beheld in Lord Shirley the only man to whom she could ever bear to surrender her liberty ; and he became very soon the only wish and passion of her impassioned nature. In vain did Lord Shirley avoid her society. She contrived to be in his way wherever he was expected. Yet at first so guarded was her manner, and so timid her expression, that though Lord Shirley suspected her attachment, he could not be quite certain of it : but finding this method of proceeding too slow and too unsure, she suffered herself to give way to the misery of unrequited love ; and by her sighs, and the mournful tenderness of her countenance, wherever she met the earl, she showed herself given up to that abandonment of tender sorrow, which, though it might flatter his vanity, disgusted his  
sense

sense of propriety, and made her further than ever from the attainment of her end.

In the meanwhile Lord Shirley's insensibility to the honour of carrying off the greatest beauty and heiress of the day, and of conquering that invulnerable heart which had so long been besieged in vain, was the wonder of every body who knew not the earl's strength of mind, and the rigidity of his ideas with respect to female conduct and manners. He was too rich to be bribed by her wealth, too young and too much admired to want to marry the first beauty whom he saw, and valued the possession of his heart at too high a rate to yield them to the weak woman who gave him hers unsought.

Sophia Clermont, to whom conquest had hitherto been habitual, and who had therefore never expected to fail of making any man her slave whom she wished to captivate, was rendered nearly frantic by  
the

the insensibility of the earl ; and as she had never been taught to restrain any passion within the bounds either of propriety or virtue, she resolved to try, as a last resource, whether Lord Shirley's vanity might not be made the means of awakening his sensibility. Accordingly, she got a friend to hint to him that a young and beautiful heiress was dying for him, and that a physician was actually called in.

Lord Shirley affected to laugh at the tale as false, and coolly said, "Poor thing ! how cruelly neglected must the education of that young person have been, who could be so completely subdued by love for any man !"

The next and most daring step was to address the earl himself, which she did certainly in touching and impassioned language, stating herself to be as she believed on her death-bed, and therefore she hoped the most rigid of women  
would



would think her privileged to own and claim his pity for a hopeless and ardent attachment which had cut her off in the very prime of her existence ;—and this letter concluded with an earnest wish to see him before she breathed her last.

Lord Shirley could not read this letter unmoved ; and however he might despise her weakness, he pitied her sufferings. But he did not like to grant her the desired interview, unless he was sure that she was really dying ; as his suspicious nature, and indeed his knowledge of character, led him to think, that the woman who had so little self-restriction as to give way in so improper a manner to the indulgence of her feelings, might also be artful enough to feign the danger to which she was really not exposed. But Sophia's physician was a young man, and very much devoted to her and her charms. He therefore, either from want of skill and experience

rience to form a right judgement of her symptoms, or from being led by partiality to believe her account of her state; rather than trust to his own opinion; assured the earl that he believed Miss Clermont to be in the greatest danger, and to be sinking very fast; adding with tears in his eyes, "And the world is going to lose its brightest ornament!"

Lord Shirley on hearing this was shocked at his suspicions; and being equally shocked at the idea of that untimely fate which he had so innocently occasioned, he hesitated no longer to grant the requested interview. Accordingly he wrote a guarded answer, but full of respectful feeling towards the unhappy writer of the letter, and promising to call on her at any hour she would appoint. She fixed an hour the next day, and Lord Shirley was punctual to his appointment.

Sophia Clermont had intended to make  
a very

a very passionate display of her tenderness in this interview, which took place in a room darkened in order to hide, not the ravages which grief and sickness had made in her person, but to conceal the glaring fact, that they had made none worth noticing, while she reclined on a *chaise longue* in a very becoming undress, and supported by pillows : but as soon as she saw Lord Shirley, all her intended acting was lost in real feeling, and the paltry artifice of her character was annihilated for a while by the manly and ingenuous sensibility of his. They were both of them at first too much agitated to speak. And when Lord Shirley spoke, he expressed with great energy his sorrow for her situation, and his hope that she would still recover.

“ To recover, is neither my hope nor my wish,” she replied ; “ but I ventured to request this interview, in order to beg a  
favour

favour of you, my lord ;—I want you to promise to accept the bequest I wish to make you, and then almost the only care I have in dying will be removed.”

“I would do any thing, however painful to me, to oblige you ; and I will even, if you desire it, accept a bequest, but I hope not a large one.”

Sophia faintly smiled, and said—  
“Certainly a very large bequest, but not one of money. It was her poor, as she called them, on an estate of hers that joined one of Lord Shirley’s ; and on this estate she had lately, in imitation of him and in order to gain his good opinion, erected schools and cottages ; and she now requested him to see that these institutions were properly kept up, and her poor properly maintained out of the funds for that purpose which she had left.”

Lord Shirley, relieved in mind by  
this

this explanation, readily promised compliance; and as he looked at her, Sophia saw in his expressive countenance, that never before had his eyes dwelt on her with such tender admiration. This conviction awakened such hope in her bosom, that, conscious she could not long continue the dying weakness which it was her interest to affect, she complained of being very faint, and, extending her beautiful hand to Lord Shirley, begged him to leave her. Lord Shirley respectfully pressed her hand to his lips, and slowly withdrew; but looking back when he reached the door, he saw the invalid raising herself on her couch without any great apparent effort; while, as she bent forward, the light from the only open part of the window fell upon her face, and he saw with some surprise that that lovely face had not lost much of its bloom, and certainly none of its roundness;

ness; and yet she was said to be dying, and she said so herself!

This sight made him suspect the reality of her danger, and he began also to think the bequest ostentatious. In short, when once suspicion and distrust get possession of the mind, their influence increases every moment; and Lord Shirley almost repented of having even for a moment thought of administering to her the medicine of hope.

Lord Shirley had met on the stairs a friend of Sophia—one of those women who have that sort of profligate unprincipled good-nature, which leads them to wish to say pleasant rather than true things; and this lady assured her that she met Lord Shirley in such a transport of grief, as could only proceed from such tender pity as must, if not already love, certainly become so in time.

Sophia's vanity made her easily believe  
this

this welcome tale ; while her reason forgot to suggest, that if this were the state of Lord Shirley's heart, what motive could there be for his not revealing it ? However, she now thought that, after having caused herself to be represented not only as at the point of death, but also as dead, it was high time to end the farce, and seem to be slowly recovering ; which she did, to the great joy of Lord Shirley, who, when he heard she was no more, had endured self-upbraidings, and misery, for which his reason disowned all necessity, though his feelings persisted in prompting them.

Sophia soon assured him she was better, under her own hand, attributing her recovery to the effect of the kind interest which she was told he had expressed for her ; and assuring him that, having seen death so near, and being weaned by this awful trial from the passions and their warfare ;

warfare ; all she now wished for was to pass the remainder of her days, which she felt would not be long, in the society of the few whom her head and heart approved ; and the only thing she required of the earl was, occasionally to join the select society that had promised to assemble at her house, during her slow convalescence.

Lord Shirley thought it would be churlish to refuse this request ; though by unreservedly complying with it he exposed himself to the influence of such fascinations as few men could have been able to resist ; and Sophia's presence became every day more necessary to his amusement if not to his happiness.

But she presumed too much and too soon on the advantage which she had gained. Again she allowed her eyes to talk a stronger language than that of friendship, and Lord Shirley was once more



more on his guard. One evening she had taken him into another room to consult him on some improvements which she wished to make in her plans for the poor, one of the earl's favourite pursuits; and in discussing them, they showed such a marked similarity in their views and sentiments, and the earl regarded her with such animated and tender pleasure, that she unguardedly exclaimed, "O Lord Shirley! united as we thus are in the most important and best pursuits of life, why cannot our union be otherwise completed? Is it, tell me—is it indeed impossible that I may ever hope to be more to you than I now am?"

Lord Shirley, thus taken by surprise, was for a moment unable to answer. At length he recovered himself, and with some firmness of manner said, "This is surely not a proper time or place to discuss so delicate a point; but, if you wish it,

it, I will no longer shrink from meeting the subject fairly, and I will do myself the honour of calling on you at any time you like for that purpose."

Sophia, though she saw in this proposal as much to fear as to hope, consented to it; and a day and hour were fixed. The earl began by assuring her that he thought her not only the most beautiful and most attractive woman also that he had ever seen, but the most eloquent and the cleverest woman that he had ever conversed with; and such was and ever had been her influence over his feelings, that it was the completest victory which his reason and his self-knowledge ever gained over him, when they positively forbade him to seek her hand in marriage.

"Positively forbid!" exclaimed Sophia: "Oh! do not say so, or you will drive me to distraction."

"Better that I should do so before than after

after marriage ; and I certainly should make you mad, and you would make me so, if we were man and wife."

"How so?—Impossible!"

"No—possible and certain ; for I am by nature jealous, and your manners are such as to drive a jealous husband into phrensy."

"My manners!"

"Yes ; they are so universally and so particularly alluring, that almost (excuse my boldness) in the words of an old song, 'the hope they give prevents desire ;' and your evident thirst for admiration robs you in my opinion of nearly all your just claim to it."

"You are severe, my lord," she replied, "but I must own that till I knew you I only wished for general admiration :—now, there is nothing I would not do, nothing I would not sacrifice, consistent with virtue and reputation, to gain from you one approving

approving smile. I am very young, and my manners may yet be altered to any thing, give me but a sufficient motive for making the change. Do let me try to be what you wish ; and do not, for mercy's sake, listen to the present prohibitions of your reason, but wait for your final decision, till you have seen what I am capable of being to please you."

"Alas !" cried Lord Shirley shaking his head, "habit is a second nature ; and you are going to alter yours, not from a conviction that those habits were always wrong, but in order to carry a point, and please me. What then shall convince me, when that point is gained, that you will not relapse again on the first temptation, and, like the cat in the fable, pursue your original propensities?"

Sophia bit her lip ; for she saw how strongly Lord Shirley's sane judgement was against her, and that his admiration of  
her

her was not strong enough to resist it : however, she again begged him not to be rash in his decisions, but allow her to new-model her manners, in order to prove that she was wax in his hands, and that he could make of her whatever he chose.

“ I will continue to visit you,” said he, “ but I solemnly assure you that I look on myself as a free man ; and let you improve as you may, I consider myself as having given you no claims on me.”

He did visit her ; and Sophia, having become modest in her style of dressing and reserved in her general appearance, won so much on the earl's confidence and esteem, while his self-love was so gratified by the metamorphosis he had occasioned, that those of her female friends, who with seeming pity, but real malignity, had told her she was always called “ Poor Sophia Clermont ” ever since it was seen that she loved Lord Shirley in vain,

vain, were now glad to flatter the vanity they had formerly wounded, in order to obtain favour with one who would, they expected, as the Countess Shirley, be more followed than ever, and give the finest parties in town.—And it is probable that Sophia would have succeeded at last in fixing the affections of the fastidious earl, and have forced him to marry her in spite of his judgement, had not his beautiful cousin been introduced to his knowledge,—showing him what he as yet had never seen, a woman who seemed to be indifferent to admiration in general, and wholly regardless whether he admired her or not. This novelty and this character immediately engaged his attention: still, when mortified at Catherine's coldness, he used to take refuge from it in the ill-concealed tenderness of the impassioned Sophia. But then, when he contrasted her passionate regard, her  
passionate

passionate glances, with the modest friendship and the chaste expression of his lovely relation, he again turned from Sophia, as Hercules did from Pleasure, and fixed his choice on Virtue in the shape of Catherine.

Sophia soon heard of the general's new-found heiress, and she read her fate in the cold abstracted manner of Lord Shirley towards her, and in his blushing cheek, and his hesitating, evasive answers, whenever he was interrogated respecting his fair cousin; while his visits at her house became very soon unfrequent. She however restrained herself within some bounds, till she heard that their marriage was certainly to take place before the birth-day, and that Catherine was to appear there for the first time as the Countess Shirley.

Even to the mildest nature, even to the best regulated mind, I believe the torture of jealousy to be full of maddening influence ;

fluence;—what then must it be to a woman unused to control her passions, and who, till she knew Lord Shirley, had known not an ungratified wish!—At length with a sort of desperate firmness she wrote to Lord Shirley the following note :

“Miss Clermont presents her compliments to Lord Shirley, and requests the honour of seeing him at her house this morning at two o’clock, to speak to him on a little business.”

The unusual coldness of the note surprised but did not alarm Lord Shirley; on the contrary, he was glad to find her style so much altered for the better, and he waited upon her with great alacrity. It was not now necessary for her to darken the room in order to conceal that no paleness had robbed her cheek of its beauty; for pale as that of death was now the cheek of Sophia Clermont, and livid as its lip was that which now, parched and quivering



quivering with emotion, assumed a ghastly smile as the earl entered, and bade him follow her to her *boudoir*. When there, she fixed on him her now dim but still piercing eyes, and asked him whether it was true that he was on the eve of marriage with his cousin.

"Though I deny your right to question me," replied the earl, "I answer No!"

"Are you engaged to her?"

"No."

"Have you ever proposed marriage to her?"

"Never."

"Do you mean to do so?"

"Some time or other probably I shall do it."

"You love her then?"

"I am now convinced I do."

"And you have the barbarity to tell me this in spite of my love for you, and in defiance of my claims?"

"Claims

“Claims you have none—I never directly or indirectly encouraged your tenderness ; else I should have blamed myself, a blame I am now wholly free from. Nay, I have been more on my guard than most men would probably have been ; for you know that my conduct to you has always been that of a brother only, though some men would have allowed themselves to express fondness for you, even though conscious that they felt not love :—therefore I have no grounds for the slightest self-reproach, and am at perfect liberty to love, to address, and to marry any woman I choose.”

“Undoubtedly—undoubtedly,” cried Sophia in a quick and hurried manner, “undoubtedly. But I will not live to see it.” Then snatching up a pistol concealed under a sofa pillow, she endeavoured to put it to her temples ; but not so quickly but that Lord Shirley had time to wrest  
it

it from her grasp, and Sophia full of agony and shame sunk back upon the sofa.

Lord Shirley felt so shocked at sight of her misery, that had he yielded to his feelings he would have clasped the poor sufferer to his bosom, and have wept over her with anxious and even fond compassion. But he knew that such proofs of tenderness would injure, not cure her; and that, whatever he felt in his heart, his conduct must be cold, if not in a measure severe and cruel.

“Rash woman!” he cried in a firm voice and chilling manner, “what could you expect by thus giving way to such a wicked indulgence of passion? Could you hope to make me pity and regret you? If so, how vain the hope, how inadequate the means! After the first dreadful shock was over, do you think I could be so imbecile as to regret that I did not love and  
marry

marry a being so much the slave of ungovernable impulse as yourself? No, dear Miss Clermont! if you wish me to honour and admire you, live and conquer this unworthy love; for that love in a woman, whoever be the object of it, must always be unworthy of her, which is wholly unsolicited and wholly unrequited."

"I thank you, my lord," cried Sophia rising, and nearly choked with indignation and resentment. "I thank you for two things: in the first place, for having saved me from the folly and wickedness of suicide; and in the second place, for having taken from me my wish to commit it, at least for your sake, as you have convinced me, by what you have just had the barbarity to utter, that your temper is as malignant as your heart is cruel and unfeeling. Away, and fear not that I shall again attempt my life! No, I despise

spise myself for my past fond folly, and all I regret is, that I ever fed your vanity by an avowal of it!’

Lord Shirley felt his mind excessively relieved by hearing this; and not waiting for a second dismissal, he hastily bowed and withdrew.

Lord Shirley seemed both by his words and manner to be so cold, so severe, and so unfeeling, that a woman of Sophia's violent spirit could not fail to resent it; and for some days she fancied herself cured of her passion: also, well knowing that Lord Shirley would never reveal what had passed, she went into company as usual, without fear of being an object either of pity or reprobation. But her secret was not so safe as she fancied; for her own maid, knowing of the appointment, had listened at the door and heard all that passed. However, she kept the secret

pretty well, till having quarrelled with her mistress she left the place, and told all she knew to her next lady; who had, however, discretion enough to whisper it *only to two or three intimate friends*; by which means the circulation of the anecdote was slow; and it was only just beginning to be known when Lord Shirley handed Miss Clermont to her carriage,—a civility which Melvyn and the duchess had both said he could not help.

It was at this moment of wounded pride and disappointed passion, of hate struggling with still powerful love, and a desire of revenge, perhaps triumphant over every other feeling in the heart of Sophia Clermont, that Melvyn became introduced at her house. Though he had no feeling like love towards her, he admired her style of beauty, and was charmed with her conversation; and while he  
 resolved

resolved to profess himself her lover, he knew he must be kindly received, because her reputation was in his power.

He had recently been staying in the village where she was born and where she had passed her youth; and there he contrived to discover a secret relative to her, which, if disclosed, might drive her out of society, or at least prevent her ever forming a respectable marriage. As their intimacy increased, he gradually hinted at his knowledge; and Sophia soon saw, that, instead of wishing to strengthen her in the paths of penitence and virtue, he was desirous of plunging her himself in the same errors which she seemed to have abandoned. And as she was in his power—the consequence was certain.—But enough of a picture so disgusting, though I am forced only to vary the scene, not to quit it entirely.

CHAP-

## CHAPTER IX.

I MUST now give some description of the real character of Melvyn.—In describing a man wholly absorbed by the desire of revenge inspired by hatred, and that hatred born of long and early jealousy, I trust I am scarcely outstepping the modesty of nature, as jealousy is, I am convinced, as powerful an agent in the moral world, as steam is in the physical one; and that the exertions of the former in their way are as pregnant with sure destruction as the explosions of the latter.

But by jealousy I do not only mean in this case the jealousy attendant on disappointed and ardent love,—I mean a feeling allied to the meaner passion of envy, and which is the result of competition; that feeling which so often makes  
the



the man of wealth underrate the riches of his rival in opulence, the professional man underrate the gains of his professional brethren, the author question the reality of his brother author's numerous editions of his works, and the beauty doubt the number and value of a rival beauty's offers.

It was this feeling which laid the foundation of that hate towards Lord Shirley in Melvyn's breast, which the other and more amiable jealousy perfected. At school, Melvyn had no competitor but the young earl—and he and he alone bore away the prizes from Melvyn, which, but for Lord Shirley's superior merit, he would have uniformly obtained. Nor was Lord Shirley less successful in gaining the love of his school-fellows to a much greater degree than he did. They were both leaders of two parties in the school, and those only whom Lord Shirley rejected, enrolled themselves

selves under the banners of Melvyn: for though Melvyn's character was unblemished, and he concealed his vices as carefully as many unguarded youth display theirs, he wanted that generous and manly spirit which always distinguished Lord Shirley: and though the manner of Melvyn was always kind, soft, and insinuating, and none but very acute observers could suspect that his temper was bad and his heart malignant, it never inspired that confidence and that devoted attachment which would at any time have led the followers of Lord Shirley to risk even their lives in his service.

It was, therefore, with a heart full of malevolent and vindictive feeling towards the unconscious earl, that Melvyn left school and went to College, where again Lord Shirley and he were competitors, and an academical honour was adjudged to the former, for which he had vainly toiled. And there was still another  
reason

reason for added hatred;—Melvyn, by means of a very active agent on such occasions, whom he had in his pay, had conveyed a beautiful girl from her father's house, who happened to be a tenant of Lord Shirley's; and the poor man in the agony of his heart went to the young earl, who was, he knew, ever ready to listen to the tale of distress, and as ready to redress wrong wherever it existed.

Lord Shirley instantly endeavoured to find out whither the deluded girl had been carried; and having discovered her, he exhibited the exemplary sight of a young and fascinating nobleman exhorting a lovely girl to fly from the temptations which were about to be offered her, and return to the safe and virtuous protection of her half-distracted parents. The consequence of his pure and pious eloquence was, that Lord Shirley bore her away in triumph from the power of Melvyn's agent,

agent, who appeared the principal in the business; but as Melvyn had visited the girl under a feigned name, the part which he had in this transaction would have been still unknown, even had his victim owned her apparent lover was not the real one: therefore, though Melvyn experienced severe disappointment he knew that he was safe every way from detection: still, he could not forgive the cause of his failure, and his hatred of Lord Shirley and desire of revenge became from that moment stronger than ever.

No wonder therefore that, when the earl a few years after deprived him as we have seen of the object of his lawful love also, and was the cause of his being refused for the first time in his life, the finishing stroke was given to his desire for vengeance, especially as he fancied Lord Shirley had interfered to prevent his lovely sister Lady Frances from

from encouraging the addresses which he was once inclined to offer her; and he resolved that the man who had so often wounded his self-love and impeded his success, should, if he could effect the dark and rooted purpose of his soul, be made to feel the results of his deep-rooted resentment; and he well knew that, if he had a heart to conceive, he had also a head to plan and a hand to execute whatever villany his malignity suggested. Such was the man who, soon after the marriage of Lord and Lady Shirley, called, as was his daily custom, at the house of Sophia Clermont.

“So,” cried Sophia, “you let that odious saint slip through your fingers at last! How could you be so stupid?—Though I never believed she preferred you to Shirley.”

“Nor *I* that Lord Shirley could ever hesitate to prefer her to you—as a *wife* I mean.

mean.—But surely I might as well reproach you for letting Shirley escape your snares—you might have contrived to entangle his honour in such a manner that he could not have helped marrying you.”

“No! I do not believe that he has so little firmness of character as to have married me had I degraded myself in his eyes, because he would have known that the advances had been all on my side, and consequently his honour free. But I would not have been his on such terms, for I loved him so truly that I was greedy of his respect; and *now*, though I am sure he blames me as indecorous and as a woman of ill-regulated mind, I have the consolation of knowing that he thinks me a woman of virtue.”

“Yes—poor men are often sad dupes,” replied Melvyn with a sneer.—“But how I hate this Shirley!”

“And how I hate his wife! nay, him too

too sometimes.—And I am told they are so happy! so attached! Oh! I could destroy them both!”

“The destruction of the husband alone would satisfy me, or rather the destruction of his happiness.”

“Nay, even your vanity, surely, cannot expect to corrupt Lady Shirley?”

“No—At least the prospect is very remote: but if I can make her lord believe that I have seduced her, I shall be quite satisfied.”

“And can you do this?”

“Yes, I think I can. I have discovered she has a secret, which is for some reason or other unknown to the earl, and is to remain so—by this means she is, in a degree, in my power.”

“Indeed! Poor creature! Then I am sure you will have no *mercy* on her.—But how can this saint have secrets which she dares not tell her husband?”

“That

“That I can't comprehend; for an unworthy secret it *cannot* be, as I believe her to be purity *itself*.”

“Not the more for being a professed saint, I suppose?”

“Indeed I *do*, for being such a saint as she is, for a professed saint she is not. You use the term in speaking of her, as one of reproach and distrust, I perceive.”

“And do not you? has she converted you, and taught you to believe in the mummery which you have so often laughed at?”

“Listen, my pretty *esprit fort*; you are a female philosopher, and it is natural enough that men should flatter female philosophers who have bright eyes, on the noble independence of their way of thinking, and admire the strength of their minds for having thrown off the shackles of vulgar prejudice.—But do you believe that the men who say this would marry a woman so thinking and so talking?”



talking? Do you not believe that they would be horror-struck to know their wife, their sister, or their daughter, had thrown off her belief in religion, and had thereby deprived herself of the only sure guardian of her morals and respectability? No, we all of us know better; and there is a something in a truly and unaffectedly pious woman, that the most abandoned libertine beholds with love and reverence."

"Reverence perhaps, but not *love*; and for my part, I wonder what you can see in Lady Shirley—though handsome, she is certainly not attractive."

"Attractive! No—not if you mean that meretricious attraction which aims not at the heart; but she is to me, and I doubt not to other men, rendered more alluring by her consummate purity, and her heavenly-mindedness. It were such a glorious triumph to be loved by such a creature,

creature, and to dispute her affections with the Great Being whom she is not ashamed to adore."

"But the generality of your sex are fools; you don't know your own interests: if you did, you would feel that the strongest and surest charm to captivate even the most profligate of our sex, must be the greatest contrast you can make yourselves in mind, manners, and appearance, to the poor wretched beings who live by the wages of iniquity. We come not into the society of virtuous women to meet the allurements or gaze on the dress of a courtesan! Poor, lovely, fascinating but mistaken girl! what have thy philosophy and thy seductions done for thee? Could they captivate for thee the only man thou hast ever loved?"

"Peace! monster, peace!" cried Sophia, almost choked with passion. "I loathe, I abhor you. Quit my sight this instant!"

stant! out of my house, or I will ring for my footman to turn you out!"

"You *dare* not, my sweet soul!" returned Melvyn with a malignant smile. "You forget you too are in my power—and I never show *mercy*, you know.—But come, I'll soothe thee again, my love, by promising you revenge on this sweet saint Shirley."

"Will you! can you do this? If so, I will forgive you any thing."

"Then will you assist me?"

"Yes; to the best of my ability."

"And you see Shirley sometimes?"

"Oh yes, he makes a point of being very civil to me; and so does his lady, with whom he delicately thought no doubt it would be well for me to seem on good terms: and I also see that he has great confidence in what I say and think."

"Indeed! I always thought him a weak man."

"Thank

“Thank ye! But you may say anything, provided you disunite this now happy couple.”

“Well, we will speak further.” And thus they separated.

But to return to the contemplation of more pleasing characters.

The fourth of June again arrived, and beheld Catherine a blooming bride at St. James's. That day as she returned, she had certainly no seizures, as Lord Shirley called them; though it is certain that she cast a timid eye on the crowd as she walked along the covered way to her carriage, and her lord followed the direction of her eyes whithersoever they moved. But to return to Lucy Merle.

When Lucy took up her abode with Catherine, she assured her noble host and hostess, that it was her earnest desire to be allowed to retire to bed when they went to evening parties, as it was by no means

means her wish to move in those circles which her situation in life gave her no right to enter, and where she could only be as an appendage to her friend.

“ Ah, Lucy !”, said Catherine, “ I see how it is ; your republican pride makes you disdain to go any where as an appendage only.

“ Not so,” replied Lucy blushing ; “ though, generally speaking, I am desirous of being a noun substantive, yet to you I should always be proud of being merely a noun adjective, and could always say—

‘ —Let my little bark attendant sail,  
Enjoy your triumph, and partake the gale. ’ ”

“ I do not doubt you,” observed Lord Shirley kindly ; “ but believe me, I know enough of fashionable life to be certain that if you are launched on its buoyant tide,

tide, only as a little attendant bark, you will soon become a vessel of gallant trim, and sail along surrounded by attendant barks yourself."

"Impossible!" cried Lucy; "you must be joking. What! such a nobody as I. What! that young person, as Mrs. Baynton used to call me; can she expect to be even looked at in the beau monde?"

"Do you think that eyes and taste are confined to the *tiers état*? O fie! this is the severest censure on the privileged orders that you have ever passed."

"I thank you for such encouraging flattery, my lord: but even now I am incredulous, and must beg always to stay at home."

"Not always:—to be sure you will accompany me to the duchess of C——'s concert?" said Catherine.

Before

Before Lucy could reply, the duchess was announced : and Lucy being the first person whom she saw when she entered, she immediately accosted her, saying that the visit was to her, and she had brought with her a card for her concert.

“ It is all in vain, duchess,” said Lord Shirley : “ our fair friend here thinks we patricians have no taste, and that if she shines in our sphere, our vision is so dim we shall not be able to distinguish her. What say you?—has she any chance do you think of being welcome amongst us as any thing but the appendage of Lady Shirley?”

“ Nay, do not blush, Miss Merle,” cried the duchess laughing, “ though I must own no one blushes more becomingly. I can understand and respect your modesty ; but trust me, and I am no flatterer, though at first you may be invited and regarded and admired for Lady

Shirley's sake, you must soon be so exclusively for your own."

"Shirley told her so," said Catherine, "but she would not believe him."

"Well, let her make the trial; and let her debut be at my house."

"Agreed," replied Lucy: "and could I but hope that all peers and peeresses were like the present, I should be thankful indeed for an introduction into circles in which such beings are to be found."

"No, my dear, no; we do not tell you to expect," answered the duchess, "many such charming creatures as we are; we flatter ourselves we are unique in our way: but we *do* tell you that you will find us better than you expect." And Lucy, pleased and encouraged, allowed Catherine to give her a dress for the approaching assembly.—At length the evening came; and Lucy having in vain summoned up all her democratic contempt of titles



titles and rank, entered the crowded rooms of the duchess with a beating heart. "They are only men and women like myself," thought Lucy, "frail, perishable beings; and why should I mind them?" Still she *did* mind them, and Lady Shirley felt the arm on which she leaned tremble with emotion.

The duchess, always herself, polite from benevolence of heart as well as polish of manners, received her fluttered guest with marked kindness; and when she pointed out an advantageous seat for hearing to Lady Shirley, she desired Lucy to take the one beside her.

During the performance which followed Lucy had time to recover herself; and she became soon regardless of the inquiring eyes turned on her, and the whispers of "Who is she?" with the answer of "A relation of Lady Shirley's by her mother's side," in observing the groups of men  
and

and women ; amongst whom was Melvyn, who came near them evidently to gaze at and admire the young and beautiful countess.

Lucy was delighted ; and certainly forgot that her little bark was entirely overlooked by the side of this gallant vessel.

Lady Shirley, ever considerate, would not leave Lucy when the first act was over, but kept her place, and kindly named to her companion those who passed or accosted her, celebrated for talents or who were of a distinguished rank in society.

The concert finished at rather an early hour, as the professional performers and singers were going to another party at the P—— of W——'s, and a great deal of the company also : and when the former were all gone and the rooms were half empty, the duchess came up to Catherine with clasped hands and declarations how  
much

much she would oblige the company if she would sing only one song,—adding an entreaty to the earl that he would join his solicitations to hers.

“Nay, duchess, that I dare not do,” he replied; “you know Lady Shirley’s dislike to any sort of display; but to oblige me she has consented to have an amateur musical party a month hence, and at her own house she has promised to sing: therefore as she has been so obliging, I do not like to ask her to do what she disapproves—namely, sing at the house of another.”

“My dear lord,” cried Catherine smiling, “I will not be obliging by halves; and if you wish me to sing here, I will sing directly.” And Lord Shirley agreeably surprised, took her hand and led her to the instrument more like a lover than a husband, while Lucy stole unobserved into a seat behind one of the folding doors, trembling

trembling lest her friend or the earl should ask her to sing also.

Melvyn, meanwhile, had not been unmindful of his deeply laid scheme. Such had been the coldness with which Lord Shirley had lately treated him, that, much as he wished it, he could not leave his card at the earl's house on his marriage; and as Catherine disapproved the manner in which Lord Shirley looked at Melvyn this evening, she made a point of being very courteous to him: while he, observing that whenever they spoke to each other some curious eyes were fixed on them, contrived to look mysterious whenever Lady Shirley addressed him, and always affected to whisper when he answered her, sighing at the same time in a very significant manner. And now he took care while Catherine was singing, to look at her with the most marked and tender admiration.

Though

Though very modest, Catherine was not at all shamefaced ; or rather she was so truly indifferent to the applause of others, that her vanity was not interested in the question whether she should perform excessively well or fall beneath herself. Consequently she felt not that fear, so much more akin (I know from experience) to vanity than to timidity, which usually prevents amateur performers from doing themselves justice ; and, except when occasionally distressed by the consciousness of having so many eyes fixed on her, she never sung better, and the company were in raptures. But Catherine sought only the approving eye of her lord ; and finding that fixed on her with delighted tenderness, she cheerfully resumed her seat at the instrument when her song was ended, and even allowed the duchess to send for her lute and guitar.

Melvyn in the meanwhile was going

about the rooms, saying, with a meaning nod and a mysterious smile, “This is not new to me—In the happy hours we passed at Hampton, Catherine Shirley used to sing to me for hours. Now alas! she is a *countess*!—would *I* had been an earl!”

When Catherine’s lute arrived, she was easily prevailed upon to sing a little English ballad, and to accompany it on that instrument. And Melvyn assured every one near him that that was his favourite song at Hampton: and the words happened to be such as to be easily applied, by those who chose it, to the idea which prevailed,—that Catherine had married Lord Shirley from pride, though *love* urged her to marry Melvyn. And this little circumstance the arch deceiver resolved to turn to account. He therefore took an opportunity of saying in a low voice to Catherine, though overheard by others,

“ I

“I thank you for singing that song—it has done me good, though it reminds me of past happy times :” while Catherine, conscious to what he alluded, blushed deeply, and raising her eyes saw Lord Shirley anxiously observing them. Nor was the confusion of one party, the anger of the other, and the lover-like look of Melvyn, lost on any one present: and various were the conjectures to which they gave rise. Had it not been for this circumstance, Lord Shirley would have felt unmixed delight from this first exhibition in fashionable life of his lady’s powers. But Melvyn’s whisper and Catherine’s blush kept possession of his imagination, and a coldness of manner which chilled the feelings of Catherine was visible even amidst the praises and thanks he bestowed on her for her performance.

As soon as Catherine had sung the  
songs

songs which her own and her lord's taste pointed out, she whispered the earl, who immediately went to seek Lucy in her lonely seat, and requested her in Lady Shirley's name to sing a duet with her,—a request which the duchess herself, on a first visit especially, was too delicate to make; and to which Lucy very reluctantly acceded. However, when handed by Lord Shirley she had gotten through the arduous task of walking across the room, much of her fear vanished; and her wish to do justice to her beloved instructress conquered all unworthy timidity.

The duet, a difficult Italian one of Mozart's, '*Ah! guarda sorella*,' was therefore admirably sung, and consequently as loudly applauded. And Lucy could not refuse to sing a favourite song also of Lord Shirley's, accompanied by Catherine. She even sung a ballad without music, and  
was



was said to resemble Mrs. Jordan both in voice and manner.

“There, you see,” whispered Lord Shirley, “I was right, and *vous avez parfaitement réussi*. Can you then bear to go away so soon, and leave the little court you have gathered around you? for I see Catherine looks fatigued.”

Lucy only answered by a look of kind reproach; and taking Lady Shirley’s hand expressed her eager wish to go away directly. Accordingly they left the rooms; but not before three or four ladies had desired to be presented to Miss Merle.

“So,” said Lucy, when they were in the carriage, “the nobody is really become somebody, Who should have thought it! Oh, my dear principles! I fear you are in a bad way.”

The earl, though rather disturbed in mind, continued to rally Lucy on her triumph of the evening; till Catherine becoming

becoming rather faint, his attention and that of Lucy was wholly engrossed by her during the remainder of the drive.

The next morning the ladies called who had desired to be presented to Lucy the preceding evening, and left cards for her.

"This is really very polite," said Lucy, pleased almost in spite of herself at this mark of attention from some of the great world; "but it is meant no doubt as a mark of respect to you, Lady Shirley."

"If so," replied Catherine, "it is the most agreeable one that can be paid me."

"Oh, you poor novices!" cried Lord Shirley laughing; "and so you cannot, Catherine, guess the cause of this attention, which I predicted would be paid to our fair companion?"

"No, not if it has any other motive than a sense of her merit, and a generous wish to give proofs of their conviction of it."

"Her merit certainly is the original  
cause

cause; but the truth is, these ladies are party-giving ladies, and as Miss Merle has sung for the duchess of C——, they humbly hope she will have the goodness to help to entertain their company also.”

“ They are much mistaken then,” cried Lucy; “ I only sing for those I respect. I honour the duchess of C——, but my voice and I are not at the command of any one.”

“ Now,” said Lord Shirley, “ now pray remark and admire my strict integrity; for not even the wish to win you over to the cause of aristocracy could prevent my showing you the *dessous des cartes*, and convincing you that this urbane attention was in the end nothing more than selfishness. Now, dear Miss Merle, forewarned, forearmed, and take care (to use a common phrase) how you say *A*; for if you say *A*, depend upon it you must say *B*.”

“ Many

“Many thanks to you,” said Lucy; “for now I feel my principles are quite safe again, and I shall have no difficulty in resisting the civility of which I know the interested motives.”

“*Ne gagez pas,*” said Lord Shirley. “And here comes one,” added he, on hearing Mrs. Somerley announced, “who will put your firmness to some test. I expected her in person this morning; as I assure you, Miss Merle, I overheard her last night loudly prefer your voice and style of singing to Lady Shirley’s.”

“Impossible!” cried Lucy.

“Oh no, very true, and very natural, as she thinks it possible *you* may sing for her, but Lady Shirley she knows, never can. Yes, I do assure you I heard her say, ‘It is evident she has been better taught, and must have had the best master:’ and when the lady to whom she spoke asked

asked who you were, she accounted for your being so highly accomplished, by supposing you were educated for a governess.—But here she is.”

The honourable Mrs. Somerley was the only child of a Mr. Nobbs, who made a large and rapid fortune in trade : and as ambition was as powerful a passion in his breast as the love of money, he resolved that Nancy Nobbs, his daughter, should marry no one but a man of rank and family. It is a maxim universally admitted to be true, that unlimited power is dangerous to the virtue and integrity of monarchs ; and I believe it to be not less so to individuals in humbler life. To be born to the possession of great wealth, as wealth is always power, is often as pernicious in its effects on the character of its possessor, as sovereign sway is on that of a king ; and the consciousness of wealth does certainly not give such graceful dignity

dignity to the manner as the consciousness of royal authority.

On the contrary, to be purse-proud is to be every thing that is offensive to the taste and feelings ; and Nancy Nobbs was certainly even from childhood purse-proud. No graceful regard for the feelings of others ever restrained her from saying things mortifying to the self-love. Conscious of independence, she uttered all she thought, because she was restrained by no fear of consequences, as she usually moved in a circle over which her riches gave her absolute sway ; and even when her money procured for her a very agreeable husband in the eldest son of a baron, and made her a peeress in prospect, the new sphere in which she now lived could not conquer the habitual insolence of her nature, and she was distinguished by what I think may with propriety be denominated *rich manners*.

Still,

Still, conscious of want of birth in herself, she endeavoured to make her original situation forgotten by constant association only with persons of her present rank in life, especially when her husband died before his father, and her hope of shining as a peeress vanished; and there was no effort which she thought too laborious, to make her house the result of all that was great, fashionable, and courted in the world of high life; and she, before whom dependents trembled, and from whom equals withdrew with fear and disgust, was the ready flatterer of the great and the distinguished, in order to induce them by their presence and their talents to give attraction to her assemblies and distinction to her concerts. To do her justice, her reputation was unblemished, and she was herself a chaste woman and a faithful wife, though her moral sense was not strong enough to lead

lead her to run counter to the stream of fashion and custom, and avoid intimacy with women of less unblemished fame.

Such was the woman who now entered Lady Shirley's room, in order to pay her compliments to Lucy, as that young lady had exhibited the preceding evening such musical powers as must make her a most desirable acquisition to a lady of party-giving notoriety: as professors, however superior, might be heard in public; but a private performer could only be heard by favour, and in a select circle. But Mrs. Somerley did not want shrewdness; she therefore resolved not to disclose her hopes and wishes on this first visit, but endeavour to find out whether Lucy really was going out as a governess, and whether in that case she might not be able to engage her gratitude by offering to procure her a situation.

“ Good morning, my lord:—Dear Lady Shirley,



Shirley, I hope you did not suffer from the hot rooms last night. But no—bloom-  
ing a-sever:—And Miss Merle too—I need  
not ask how you do; such brilliancy of  
complexion—really you put my poor rouge  
to the blush. Why do you look saucy,  
Lord Shirley? I suppose you think it is red  
enough without blushing—but you know  
I do not mind you.”

“Pray sit down,” said Lord Shirley.

“Oh, I am not come to stop; I am  
only come to pay my compliments to that  
young lady,—unless I can prevail on you,  
Lady Shirley and Miss Merle, to accom-  
pany me into the Drive; and in that case  
I will wait till you are equipped.”

“I can’t attend you,” said Catherine,  
“as I have business to do at home; but  
I really wish my friend to accompany you.”

“Me! Oh, no—by no means; I had  
rather not.”

“Remember,” replied Catherine, “that  
you

you never yet have been up and down the Drive."

"No! not on a Sunday?"

"Neither Miss Merle nor I go in the Park on a Sunday."

"True, true—I had forgotten," said Mrs. Somerley with a sarcastic smile. "Do then, my dear Miss Merle, let me have the pleasure of introducing you into the monotonous but fashionable enjoyment of the morning. It will give me too an opportunity of making an acquaintance of which I have taste enough to be desirous."

"You had better accept Mrs. Somerley's offer, Miss Merle," said Lord Shirley, looking significantly at Lucy: "you may never have such an opportunity again." For, knowing Lucy and her *chaperone* equally well, he thought it very probable the former might make some observations likely to render her no longer agree-

agreeable to the latter. And Lucy, feeling that she could not again refuse without incivility, told Mrs. Somerley she would detain her only while she got her hat and shawl.

“ Oh dear ! to be sure you are not going to pull off that pretty cap ? ” exclaimed Mrs. Somerley. “ I never saw any thing so becoming,—and quite the thing for the Drive.”

“ Then I will only get my shawl, madam.”

“ Dear me ! I believe it is very rude to admire what any one wears ; but really I cannot help admiring this cap—May I ask where you bought it ? ”

“ Oh, madam, I am my own milliner.”

“ Aye, that’s right ; if one wishes to have a thing well made one must make it oneself. But I am too stupid, and have  
no

no taste of my own, though I can admire it in others."

"But it is not from taste but necessity that I am my own milliner," replied Lucy smiling; "and my poverty but not my *will* consents."

"Oh, you are an œconomist you mean,—and so ought every one to be."

"No, madam, I mean what I say, that I am *poor*, for I am not ashamed of my poverty."

"I dare say not; that is greatness of mind," observed Mrs. Somerley, resolved to praise Lucy *coute qui coute*.

At this moment Catherine, seeing by Lucy's rising colour, which was not rendered paler by Lord Shirley's arch look, that she was on the point of uttering some indignant rejection of this compliment, advised her friend to go for her shawl, and not keep Mrs. Somerley, who had said she was  
in

in a hurry. Lucy took the hint and obeyed.

“What a beautiful young creature that is!” cried Mrs. Somerley when Lucy was gone. “And such a voice! such taste! such execution! Really to hear you and her together, Lady Shirley, was quite being in Elysium!”

“I am glad you were pleased,” said Lady Shirley. “And my friend Lucy deserves all you can say in praise of her beauty and her singing. But I assure you her virtues and her other talents are equal to what you are acquainted with; and the idea of her quitting England is a real grief to me.”

“Quitting England!” cried Mrs. Somerley, her countenance changing, much to the amusement of Lord Shirley, who was apparently reading the newspaper, but was looking over it at Mrs. Somerley. “Dear me! I thought she was seeking

ing a situation as a governess somewhere?"

"Oh no: Miss Merle has an independent fortune, and she only leaves me to go to America to her father and mother." Mrs. Somerley on hearing this repented of having asked her to be her companion to the Drive. But, recollecting herself, she said, "Pray how soon does she go?"

"Oh! not of a month or more," replied Lady Shirley. Therefore as Mrs. Somerley's grand party was to take place before that time, she resumed her design on poor Lucy, and with it her smile. Lucy at this moment returned, and Mrs. Somerley took her leave, followed by her reluctant associate.

When they were gone Lady Shirley said, "Surely, my dear lord, you were uncandid in imputing Mrs. Somerley's visit to Lucy to interested motives; you see she never alluded to any projected party;

party; and I believe that her attention proceeds from the real *fancy* (as people say) which she has taken to Lucy."

"My dear, candid, consistent Catherine," replied the earl, "as I know you love to think well of every one, I will not contradict you, but leave it to time and Lucy to inform you whether I am right or not. However, I am glad you said what you did concerning Lucy's fortune, though I am much afraid that, if Mrs. Somerley alludes to her independent property, Lucy will think she is laughing at her, and again talk of her poverty."

The truth was, Lord Shirley and the general had together settled a very considerable sum of money on Lucy, of which she was to know nothing till she was on-board ship, lest the pride and independence of her spirit should make her refuse it.—But all the money was to be given her in the general's name, and as

a return for the protection afforded Catherine by Mrs. Merle, and the attentive affection which Lucy had always displayed towards her.

As soon as Mrs. Somerley and Lucy were seated in the carriage, the former desired to be driven to Lord X——'s, as she wished to call on Lady X——: and Mrs. Somerley added, turning to Lucy, "Now, my dear, you shall see the most beautiful and fascinating of women."

"What! is she more beautiful and fascinating than Lady Shirley?"

"As beautiful, and far more seducing, though many years older than Lady Shirley." And till they stopped at Lady X——'s door Mrs. Somerley talked of nothing but the magic powers of the charming viscountess.

Lady X—— was indeed charming; but had Lord Shirley suspected that Mrs. Somerley would have taken Lucy  
to



to her house, he would not have allowed a young person under his protection to have accompanied her.—Though used to behold beauty in its perfection in Catherine, and also accustomed to see a more than common share of it in her looking-glass, Lucy could not behold Lady X—— without admiration. True, she was no longer young,—true that her bloom was artificial ; but there was a brilliancy of eye, a play of countenance, a gracefulness of person and manner, and a charm of voice, that fully entitled her to the epithet of a fascinating, seducing woman. It was something Lucy had never seen before ; and she was not quite sure that she approved, though she admired it :—it was too soft, too insinuating ; it was the same manner in a woman, which she had always distrusted in Melvyn ; and even the winning kindness with which Lady X—— accosted her, though  
it

it flattered her self-love, failed to excite her confidence.

“Is this Miss Merle?” said Lady X——  
 “this the young lady whose vocal powers charmed every one last night, even though Lady Shirley sung? How much obliged I am to you, dear Mrs. Somerley, for bringing her hither, as I was so unfortunate as neither to see nor hear her. But I find the charm was not in voice only; the eye and the ear were both gratified, which is not often the case.”

“I suppose, if Lord Shirley be right,” thought Lucy, “that she also is going to give a party soon. Oh! the meanness of the great!” And with almost repulsive coldness did she reply, “Your ladyship is too obliging.”

But Lady X—— did not observe her manner: she was so sure that an obscure miss must be delighted and flattered by her praise, that a smile played as usual  
 on

on her beautiful lips, and both ladies in turn addressed direct and oblique flatteries to Lucy.

The viscountess then talked of Lady Shirley in high terms, in which Lucy as warmly joined. She spoke in the same terms of Lord Shirley. But Mrs. Somerley declared he was in her opinion an overrated man, and neither in beauty, manners, talents, nor virtues, was he worthy, she thought, of the high reputation which he had gained.

"Then I am sure you do not know him, madam," cried Lucy, her face on fire at this attack on a man whom she justly considered as an example to his fellows; "for those who do know him must think him the noblest of his sex."

The women of the world looked archly and oddly at Lucy as she spoke, and then significantly at each other; while the eyes of Mrs. Somerley twinkled with numberless

berless meanings. "You speak warmly, Miss Merle," said she.

"I feel warmly, madam."

"I do not doubt it," observed Lady X—— with a look which Lucy did not like, but could not understand.

It was impossible for a pure-minded girl like Lucy Merle to imagine for one moment, that the honest praise which she had given to the worth which she admired, could have been construed by any one who heard it into an improper attachment to the husband of her friend.

"I think, Miss Merle, you are going to America, soon?" observed Mrs. Somerley with a leering look at Lady X——. "And Lady Shirley declares herself to be so sorry to part with you!"

"Very sorry, I dare say," cried the viscountess, returning the look of Mrs. Somerley.

"I dare say she *is* very sorry," replied  
Lucy,

Lucy, not liking the tones of either speaker, because they seemed to convey doubts of Lady Shirley's veracity. "Lady Shirley never says any thing she does not mean."

"Then she is a very extraordinary woman," said Lady X——.

"She is an extraordinary woman," answered Lucy,—“a very superior, a very uncommon woman. Indeed I believe she has not her equal on earth.”

"Nor in heaven either, you think, I suppose," said Mrs. Somerley with an irreverend laugh that shocked Lucy.

"I presume not, madam," she replied, "to speculate on subjects so sacred; it is sufficient for me to know that Lady Shirley's conduct on earth is such as to prepare her for heaven."

"Well, child," said Mrs. Somerley, with her usual insolence "— you are monstrous handsome, and I dare say very

clever : but you are a great quiz in some things, though you make very pretty caps and sing very pretty songs."

Lucy smiled good-humouredly in return, for she liked her rudeness better than her flatteries: and as the ladies began to converse with each other on the faults and follies of their mutual friends and acquaintance, Lucy opened a folio book of prints which lay on the table, and amused herself with looking over its contents. But her attention, spite of herself, was arrested by some of the conversation that was going forward; and often Lucy doubted whether it was possible that she could hear aright : but a few minutes convinced her that she heard only too perfectly.

"Do you visit Mrs. Benson now?" asked Mrs. Somerley.

"Yes, from habit, not love; for she  
and

and her husband are both very dull, and their only recommendation is that they have a good cook."

"Yes, she is dull indeed, though it was thought her little affair with *you know who* enlivened her. But perhaps that was all scandal."

"Scandal, do you call it?" replied Lady X——. "Dear me! I think the report creditable to her; I liked her all the better for being the mistress of a certain charming duke."

At this shameless avowal of profligacy, this daring confession that she admired a woman the more for being an adulteress, Lucy rose indignantly from her seat, and desired leave to sit in another room till Mrs. Somerley was ready to go,—on whose countenance, though she meanly seemed to assent by a smile to the observation of her noble friend, the quick eye  
of

of Lucy read disapprobation of the sentiment.

“To be sure you may go if you choose it,” said the viscountess. “But wherefore? are you ill? What has happened?”

“My illness, madam,” replied Lucy, “is of the mind, not the body. I *dare* not stay; you are so beautiful and so fascinating that I dare not expose myself to the danger of having my principles corrupted, by listening to the praises of adultery from a being so calculated to make the *wrong* appear the *better* cause.”

“Monstrous assurance!” cried Mrs. Somerley.

“Really,” cried the viscountess, whose self-love had been nearly as much gratified by Lucy’s praise as piqued by her severity, “you are at perfect liberty to go; and I advise a precipitate retreat to your carriage, as even my house may have an  
improper



improper influence on your sanctity : and when there, you may, you know, till Mrs. Somerley comes, indulge your imagination in contemplating the *excelling charms* of your *friend's husband* : Therefore Miss—Miss what is your . . . . name, I beg you to vanish directly.”

Though little inclined to laugh, as her sense of rectitude had been deeply wounded, Lucy, who had a quick sense of the ridiculous, could not restrain her propensity to laughter, when she found the flattered and delightful Miss Merle of the preceding half-hour converted into a Miss—what-is-your-name : and while she laughed, her countenance wore an expression of satire and a power of ridicule which alarmed Lady X——; for though she was proof against grave and moral rebuke, she shrunk from ridicule; and having heard that Lucy was a young person of great talents, her fears converted her into an  
author

author and a wit, and she saw herself by anticipation the subject of an epigram or a lampoon.

Accordingly she followed Lucy to the door; and politely expressing her sorrow that any thing which she had uttered in the foolish levity of her heart should have shocked Miss Merle, whose principles she honoured and whose ingenuousness she respected, she hoped to have the honour of her company at a small party and a *petit souper* on the following Thursday.

Her countenance had now assumed its sweetest and most winning expression; and Lucy, spite of her rigid integrity, felt almost reluctant to assure her, that in the house and in the presence of such an enchantress she never willingly would trust herself again. She then ran hastily down stairs and jumped into the carriage, almost astonished at her own daring, yet rich in  
the

the approving feelings of her heart and her conscience.

But Lucy would have felt it difficult for even their approbation to have supported her spirits, had she known that Lady X—— believed her to be a consummate hypocrite, and that Mrs. Somerley agreed to what Lady X—— advanced, though she did not in her heart believe it to be true ; since the viscountess declared that she was herself convinced, and she would tell every one, that Lucy Merle was the mistress of Lord Shirley, whose well-known pride, she said, was such, that he would not have let his lady associate with a low-born girl unless he had had his private reasons for it.

So impossible is it for the consciously vicious to believe in the existence of virtue, so certain it is that the only women who are candid in their judgements of other women and slow to admit suspicions  
to

to their disadvantage, are those whose own minds are unconscious of impure propensities, and whose experience teaches them that situations of *danger* are not necessarily *improved* opportunities of *vice*.

Mrs. Somerley assured Lady X—— that when she rejoined Lucy she would give her a fine dressing (for such was her vulgar expression). But her courage failed her when she saw the culprit, who awaited her with a calm determined countenance, and was prepared rather for attack than for defence.

“ So, Miss Merle,” said Mrs. Somerley, averting her eyes from the fixed and penetrating glance of Lucy; “ this is the return you make me for my civility in taking you out with me,—you think proper to affront my friends—and a woman of high rank too !”

“ I have no respect for rank, madam, unaccompanied by virtue; and *you* affronted

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ed me in the *first* instance by taking me to the house of an unprincipled woman, and she affronted me in the next by talking in a manner offensive to good morals."

"Mighty fine! What, then, do you not think Lady X—— fit company for you?"

"No, madam; and I am sure Lord and Lady Shirley would be of the same opinion."

"Lady Shirley might, because she is a saint and a prude; but I should suppose Lord Shirley more indulgent to such little peccadillos."

"Little peccadillos! Oh, madam! though the rank and the fashion of Lady X—— might induce you to veil your own better feelings before her, do not continue a disingenuousness so unjust to your real nature. I know you are your-  
self

self a woman of correct conduct, or Lord and Lady Shirley would not have allowed me to go out with you."

"Very condescending indeed!" said Mrs. Somerley: though she was gratified by the just discrimination of Lucy.

"I am no flatterer," continued Lucy; "and though you had the weakness to assent by smiling silence to what that unhappy lady uttered, I saw on your countenance an expression of virtuous disapprobation."

"Child, I believe you are a witch," replied the pleased yet mortified Mrs. Somerley. "But you have no right to conclude Lady X—— otherwise than a virtuous woman in conduct, though in conversation she be *un peu libre*."

"Pray, madam," said Lucy, "does Lady Shirley visit Lady X——?"

"No, I believe she does not."

"But

“ But did Lady X—— call on her on her marriage?”

“ I, I—yes— I dare say she did.”

“ Then, madam, I am answered.”

“ But whither is the stupid man going !” cried Mrs. Somerley, pulling the check-string.

“ To Lord Shirley’s—to Grosvenor Square, whither I desired him to go before you left Lady X——.”

“ What! will you not go into the Drive with me, according to our original engagement ?”

“ Our original engagement is void, madam, as you departed from it in taking me to call on Lady X——, and I had now much rather go home, having seen quite enough of fashionable society for one day.”

“ As you please,” returned Mrs. Somerley, biting her lip. But recovering herself,

herself, as she did not like to give up all hope of benefiting by Lucy's musical talents, she tried to soothe her ruffled plumes by administering to her that ample dose of flattery which, with less powerful minds, had so often succeeded. And after praising Lucy's fine voice, taste, and execution, she assured her that every one said she sung much better than Lady Shirley, and had evidently been *better taught*."

Lucy smiled, and said "her instructor was indeed first-rate."

After a few more compliments, Mrs. Somerley said she was going to have a small select party in a few days, and should be happy indeed if Miss Merle would do her the honour of coming to it, and oblige her so far as to sing during the course of the evening.

"I am so unused to sing without my

*mis-*



*mistress*," said Lucy, "that I cannot answer for being able to sing without her."

"Your mistress! Dear me! who is she? and where does she live? Perhaps she would come too!—Cannot we drive to her house now, and ask her?"

"If you choose; but I am sure it would be in vain."

"What! could not money nor flattery prevail on her? or the promise of patronage?—there is nothing I would not do, no trouble I would not take, to get her and you to my party."

"I believe you," replied Lucy: "but my mistress does not want either money or patronage, and to flattery she is superior."

"You may believe that, but I do not. But tell me, who is this *rara avis*?"

"My mistress, and the only mistress I ever had in any branch of art, is Lady Shirley."

Mrs. Somerley bit her lip again, and was  
too

too much provoked, too mortified, to reply. —At this moment the carriage stopped at Lord Shirley's, and with a cold bow and "Good morning" on either side the new acquaintance parted, to meet as Lucy hoped no more.

Lord and Lady Shirley were only just returned from a walk in the Square, and were surprised to see Lucy come back at an hour when the most fashionable were only just entering the Park. But they both commended Lucy for returning as she did, having had such cause to be offended with her companion; while even the candid Catherine could not help owning that Mrs. Somerley was not worthy the confidence they had reposed in her, and that her civility to Lucy was not as disinterested as she at first thought it.

Lord Shirley, more displeased than Catherine, because better acquainted with the real character of the viscountess, resolved

to

to call on Mrs. Somerley and reproach her with her conduct. Accordingly he went to her house at the usual hour of returning from the Park, and expressed his displeasure so strongly, that Mrs. Somerley was provoked to tell him what Lady X—— suspected of his intimacy with Lucy; and promised him that if he would let her sing for Lady X—— and herself, she would prevail on the viscountess to forgive Lucy's impertinence, and not mention her suspicions to any one.

It was impossible for Lord Shirley to hear this coarse calumnious information without indignation the most violent; and his just reproaches irritated Mrs. Somerley so much, that in her heart she vowed to take every opportunity of revenge; and she was not long without having the opportunity she desired.

But every design on the vocal powers of Lucy Merle was frustrated by her  
being

being summoned to Gravesend ; as the person who was to have charge of her on her voyage to America had transacted his business, and the packet on-board of which he had engaged their passage was ready to sail for Philadelphia.

It is needless to describe the grief of Lucy at parting with Lady Shirley, who with her lord accompanied her to Gravesend. Nor did Lucy feel much less sorrow at bidding adieu to the earl, whose conduct to her had been consistently kind and generous, and whose attention, perhaps, she valued the more because it was unexpected. At length the signal was given ; and Lucy, too wretched to speak her adieu, gazed her last in silence on the friend so dear to her heart. Lady Shirley also felt considerable pain at the separation : but then she had a comforter still more dear than Lucy to support her under the trial ;  
and

and a friend, however dear, cannot be—I had almost said, ought not to be—so dear to the wife as she was to the single woman.

A husband, if he fulfils the duties of that sacred relation, is the best friend of his wife, and she requires no other confident; and if he does not fulfil them, it is better for a woman to be without the temptation to violate one of the most sacred of her duties, by having it in her power to complain of her husband's infirmities to a female friend.

## CHAPTER X.

I HAVE before said that Mrs. Somerley was so irritated by Lord Shirley's severe observations when he called to reprove her for having carried Lucy Merle to the house of Lady X——, that she resolved, if possible, to take what she denominated some clever and humorous revenge on him and his sanctified countess : and as she was skilled in the disgraceful art of playing tricks, and taking people in as it is called, she was not slow to contrive or to execute a scheme against Lady Shirley. Still she had some difficulty in procuring an opportunity, as there was too little congeniality of disposition between them to admit of intimacy : but as Mrs. Somerley had recommended a nurse to Lady Shirley, and the latter wished to put  
some

some questions relative to her to the lady whom she had attended in her confinement, Mrs. Somerley offered to attend her thither any morning that she chose; and a day being fixed on for the purpose, Catherine sent word that she should call for Mrs. Somerley in her own carriage.

I have observed that Mrs. Somerley was not at all nice in the choice of her acquaintance, and that, from some singular obliquity of feeling, she had no objection, though not a woman of gallantry herself, to associate with those who were so, if wealth and title were the appendages of infamy, and that the fallen sister could minister in any way to her interest or amusement.

At this time Mrs. Somerley was in the habit of visiting a *divorcée*,—or to speak less affectedly, a divorced wife,—who had been deserted by her lover, but was trying to

beguile her sorrows by keeping an elegant house, a good table, and attracting around her such of her own sex who were not too scrupulous to visit her, and those of the other by whom great beauty and pleasing talents were not the less admired because they were united to morals any thing but severe.

Yet there were times when her fall from reputation and this comparative exile from society was felt severely by this frail but lovely being, especially when she heard the charming of her own sex extolled for that virtue which she herself had forfeited.—Such praise she had heard with envy and humiliation bestowed on Lady Shirley ; and once when alone with Mrs. Somerley, she had with many tears declared that she did not know how to endure the sensation of her own shame when she heard Lady Shirley so extolled, and felt that she was once what Lady Shirley now was :



was : and she ended with expressing a strong but fruitless wish to see this admired woman.

On this conversation Mrs. Somerley founded her scheme of what she thought witty and humorous revenge on "the proud, oracular, and puritanical earl."

: During their drive, which was to a villa some miles from London, Mrs. Somerley contrived to turn the conversation on gallantry and divorces ; subjects very disagreeable to Lady Shirley, who thought it more serviceable to contemplate pictures of virtue than pictures of vice. Mrs. Somerley at last ventured to say that she always pitied those poor women so much whom the villanous acts of men had lured from their place in society, that if they were not very bad she sometimes in private visited them.

" Indeed ! " cried Lady Shirley : " that is going rather too far, I think : they are  
certainly

certainly objects of the greatest pity, but surely it does not follow that they are to be visited as if they had not erred."

"What! I suppose, like the lady who left the box when Lady V—— entered, as the story goes, you think such errors catching?"

"By no means," replied Lady Shirley: "still I should have done exactly as that lady did, and I have always considered Lady V—— as having, by the observation imputed to her, only proved her callous effrontery equal to her vices. It seems to me not enough that a woman is consciously virtuous herself, but she must appear to reverence and value virtue in others; and if she is equally kind to the bad and the good, how is she to show that preference for virtue, which, as far as example goes, is of service to the cause of good morals. Besides, one reason why I would not from choice associate with depraved women is this: I have no sympathy

sympathy with them ; my views of life are different to theirs ; nor could I talk with them on the most important and interesting of all subjects. If I talked on morals, I should seem to be insulting their want of them ; if on religion, I should feel that they could not like to discourse on those hopes which they had been contented to resign.”

“ But suppose they were penitent, Lady Shirley—Suppose that to talk on religion, and to hope through penitence to regain the expectations which they had forfeited, were the first delight of their contrite and broken spirit ?”

“ Why then, madam, I should exhort them not to wish to return, even if they could, to the world that had properly rejected them ; but to fly to solitude to humble themselves in the spirit of true penitence before the Being whom they had offended, and to seek the knowledge of  
holy

holy things from the Gospel and its ministers."

"O! but there is something in the pity of a woman for a frail sister, that no man can equal. A pious and virtuous woman, speaking comfort, and giving religious support to a penitent sinner, is a sight that angels might joy to look upon; especially if that woman be young and beautiful, and steers safely through the quicksands that have wrecked the peace of the being whom, with angelic benevolence, she is deigning to cheer. Lady Shirley, I am neither young nor beautiful, nor at all versed in the mysteries of religion; but all *I* can do, I *do* do, and am doing at this time for a poor penitent, whose fate has been peculiarly hard, as she has been forsaken by the man for whose sake she left her husband."

"What retributive justice!—But pray, Mrs. Somerley, are you sure which she

sorrows

sorrows for the most—the loss of her honour, or the loss of her lover?”

“Nay, that is uncandid,” replied Mrs. Somerley; “for my friend is a real penitent: and I heard her express such bitterness of remorse, and saw her shed so many tears the other day, that you would have wept, as I did, had you been present; especially as you were the cause.”

“I the cause!”

“Yes: it was after hearing you extolled for your virtue and piety as well as beauty, that she contrasted herself with you, and wept over the afflicting contrast.”

“Poor thing!” cried Lady Shirley. “Well, let her humbly and fervently endeavour by her life to come to make her peace with Heaven, and there is no doubt of her succeeding—Let her read her Bible, and there is scarcely a page that does not assure us of pardon and

salvation to those who diligently seek them."

" Ah! Lady Shirley, this is very true ; and if you, to whom that blessed book is so familiar, would talk thus to my poor friend, you might do her good."

" I, madam—I! Surely the clergyman of the parish would do her much more."

" He! why he is a man of fashion, and she knows his practice too well to be improved by his theory."

" Dreadful perversion of a sacred situation!—But, madam, there are, there must be clergymen who are fitted for an office like this—Lord Shirley's domestic chaplain would visit this poor lady at any time: Shall I send him?"

Here Mrs. Somerley could scarcely refrain from laughing aloud at the *bon-homme* of Lady Shirley, who believed firmly in the pretended penitence of her *protégée*. And so good a joke would it  
have

have been if Lord Shirley's severe chaplain had waited on the lady in question, (whom I shall call Lady Vortex,) that she was half tempted to let Lady Shirley send him, by way of *making fun*, of which she was very fond. But on reflection she gave up this idea; and saying Lady Vortex was not enough advanced, she feared, to venture at present on this step, she again urged Lady Shirley to prepare her mind for it by a private visit to her herself.

"To say the truth," added she, "I am going to her after we have called at the shops I mentioned; and if you would accompany me, it would be doing a most generous and even pious action—for surely to lead a sinner to her God is a pious action,—and you would rejoice in it to the last day of your life."

"You may be right," said Lady Shirley thoughtfully; "I might have some influence

fluence at least, in prevailing on her to consult better directors than myself. Well, I will consider of it."

"O! but there is nothing like the time present; and my poor friend too has such a cough!"

"Indeed! And now I recollect, Lord Shirley has just given a living to a very admirable man, who comes to us this evening; and I know no one so likely to do your friend essential service.—Perhaps if I see her to-day, I could persuade her to see him tomorrow."

"Very likely," said Mrs. Somerley, shaking with inward laughter at the success of her scheme.

"Well then, I will accompany you—You think she will be at home?"

"O! she rarely goes out; but I will send a little note to say we are coming."

Accordingly, at the milliner's where they stopped when they returned to town

Mrs.



Mrs. Somerley wrote a note, and dispatched it, as she thought to her friend ; though, as it happened, it was taken to the wrong house : for though from habit Mrs. Somerley called this lady Lady Vortex, and wrote to her as such, she was now only Miss Newbury, and that name was on her door : consequently as Lord Vortex was married again, the servant, who was a new one, carried the note to the bride, Lady Vortex.

The note was as follows :

“ My dear Creature,

“ You wished to see the Shirley, the pretty saint ; and I am bringing her to see the pretty sinner : but she comes expecting to see a penitent—a Magdalen—So no rouge, no undress, clothed up to the chin ; no *boudoir*—modest parlour ; pale cheeks ; downcast eyes ; prim mouth,  
and

and *de grands sentiments; des remords*, and  
 —a receipt to make a Magdalen. I can no  
 more; but be alone—no men. Yours ever,  
 C. SOMERLEY.”

“P.S. It was hard work to persuade her,  
 but she could not resist the hope of preach-  
 ing a little. If you have a Bible, let it peep  
 out from under a sofa-pillow.”

As soon as Lady Shirley had resolved  
 to pay this visit,—though she wished she  
 had first consulted her lord on the sub-  
 ject,—she gave loose to the suggestions of  
 her generous and pious nature, and look-  
 ed forward with delight to the idea of  
 serving and saving an erring but re-  
 pentant fellow-creature: and by the  
 time they reached Miss Newbury’s door  
 her countenance was so radiant with be-  
 nevolence, that Mrs. Somerley thought  
 she had never seen her so transcendantly  
 handsome;

handsome; and she rejoiced that her friend would see the reigning beauty in the greatest possible perfection.

When they alighted, on the servants saying her lady was at home, Mrs. Somerley led the way into a parlour, saying, "We shall find your lady here, I conclude?"

"O, no, madam; my lady is in the *boudoir*."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, quite sure." And Mrs. Somerley bit her lip with vexation, at finding her orders so ill attended to; while the servant preceded them up stairs.

The parlour into which Mrs. Somerley wanted to introduce Lady Shirley was the only room in the house that did not seem to owe its decoration to the hand of Luxury itself: but the landing-place, and the rooms through which they followed to the *boudoir*, were full of the most odorous

ferous

ferous plants ; while from the half-opened door of that beautiful apartment they inhaled the perfume of pastiles which were that moment sending forth their fragrant clouds from costly incense vases.

Miss Newbury was no longer young ; and she called on art in liberal quantities to supply the deficiency of nature. She also availed herself, in this her usual sitting-room, of what the French call *le petit jour*, in order to conceal the absence of youth and heighten the presence of beauty : and to do this still more effectually, the light entered only through rose-coloured blinds and draperies, which threw a becoming tint over every one present.

In this apartment Miss Newbury was reclining on a sofa. A bold-looking woman of a certain age was sitting on a chair at a little distance fondling a parrot, while a puppy-dog was tearing to pieces

pieces several unreceipted bills, on the top of which was visible "Per bill delivered." Two youths of rank and fashion were employed, the one in clasping an amber bracelet round the beautiful and very naked arm of Miss Newbury, the other in fastening a sandal which enclosed a very pretty and exposed ankle, and made up the sum of fashionable display which distinguished her whole person; while a man of *ton* reclined at whole-length on his back, and on a *chaise longue* opposite.

At this moment the servant announced Mrs. Somerley and Lady Shirley.

"Who!" cried Miss Newbury; "Lady Shirley!—No, that's a joke of Somerley's."

"And no bad one," said one of the youths. When lo! Mrs. Somerley entered. And even Mrs. Somerley had the grace  
to

to blush on entering followed by Lady Shirley.

The round arm remained unbraced, the pretty ankle unsaddled; for the youths involuntarily started up, and Miss Newbury did the same; but the bold-looking woman kept her seat, as regardless of Lady Shirley's presence as the parrot and the puppy-dog. But not so the mistress of the house: she had not yet with her virtue lost her respect for it; and feeling confused and humbled by the presence of one to whose society she had forfeited her claims, she stood embarrassed and motionless, not knowing what to say, and unable even to beg Lady Shirley to be seated; while even Mrs. Somerley was so taken by surprise at seeing so different a scene from what she expected, that she too was silent, and averted her eyes carefully from the inquiring eyes

eyes of the men, who seemed to ask by their looks, "Why, in the name of all that's odd, did you bring Lady Shirley hither?"

But the confusion was soon ended.— Though Lady Shirley's self-possession was awhile taken from her by surprise, yet it returned as soon as ever she saw that she had been the dupe of a coarse-minded woman; and recovering with it all the consciousness of her high and unspotted character, she said with great dignity, "There has been some mistake here— 'This is not the lady I came to visit, and I can have no business here.'" Then with a graceful bow of the head to the disconcerted Miss Newbury she suddenly left the room, and running down stairs ordered her carriage to be instantly called.

She had scarcely disappeared, when the two youths, who were well-known to Lady Shirley, ran out after her to see her

her to her carriage, and with a feeling as if they wished to apologize to her for being with Miss Newbury : but this was only a feeling ; for what had they to apologize for, and what could it signify to Lady Shirley, whom and where they visited. Still, they felt an irresistible wish to be thought well of by such a woman, and a still stronger wish to know by what chance she came in that house. But they dared not put any questions to her when they joined her in the hall while she waited for her carriage, as there was a dignity in Catherine's manner that checked their freedom. An every-day woman would have told them unasked, and complained of Mrs. Somerley : but Lady Shirley felt that such a communication would be indelicate ; and as it must have led her to speak severely of Mrs. Somerley, it was more consistent with her Christian forbearance not to speak at all ;  
and



and she knew that it was not necessary for *her* to justify herself for being seen one instant at Miss Newberry's. As she drove off, Catherine desired the servant to tell Mrs. Somerley she would send the carriage back for her.

When the gentlemen went up stairs again, they found Miss Newbury and Mrs. Somerley in grand debate—Miss Newbury reproaching Mrs. Somerley bitterly for having exposed her to insult by bringing Lady Shirley on false pretences to her house, and also of having, as the world would think, made her a partner in an insult offered to Lady Shirley; while Mrs. Somerley laid all the blame on her not being prepared to receive such a visitor, and wondering what was become of the note. “My servant must have made a mistake; let him be rung for”—and the servant came.

“To whom, you stupid blockhead,”  
cried

cried Mrs. Somerley, "did you carry that note?"

"As directed, madam; to Lady Vortex's."

"You are a fool!—get out of my sight directly, and go and get back the note."

"You told me it was for Lady Vortex, and so it was directed."

"No doubt the man is right, for you do direct to me by that odious name," cried Miss Newbury: "and now your delectable note will be sent all over the town, and I shall suffer for what I am entirely ignorant of.—And do see how Lord Norberry there is laughing and enjoying my discomfiture."

"Why who can help it, to see the hoaxter *hoax'd*? for you must own Lady Shirley has it hollow on her side; since even Mrs. Somerley here looked silly, aye and abashed, though I do not know why. But I suppose she thought it a good joke

to

to get the fair saint here, and brought her on a false pretence : and now it seems the ‘ note of preparation ’ was sounded in wrong ears.”

“ It is good fun, ‘ faith,” cried the other young man : while the indolent gentleman on the sofa declared it was quite a new scene, but he did not comprehend it : and the bold-looking woman said it was a great fuss about nothing. “ But, Mrs. Somerley, we told the servant,” said Lord Norberry, “ that we would deliver Lady Shirley’s message, which was that she would send the carriage back for you.”

“ Well, that part of my fun, however, is not spoiled ; for I will keep the carriage some time, and that shall be seen at Miss Newbury’s door.”

“ And if it waited for Lady Shirley, madam,” cried Miss Newbury, rising indignantly, “ I should be proud of having it seen there. But as it would wait only  
for

for a Mrs. Somerley, I will not have it wait a moment ; but let it get rid of its fare as soon as it can." Then ringing the bell—"White!" said she to her man, "let us know as soon as ever the carriage returns."

"If this be the case, madam, and this is your gratitude, I shall not wait for the carriage, but walk home," cried Mrs. Somerley ; "and it will be long before I trouble you with my presence again : and I deserve this return, for frequenting out of good-nature, such society as yours."

Before Miss Newbury could reply, Mrs. Somerley's servant came in to say that he had been for the note, and that Lady Vortex sent word she had sent it inclosed to Lady Shirley.

This information startled even Mrs. Somerley, and did not appease the rage of either ladies ; while the young men and the loungee, finding all the smiles of  
Miss

Miss Newbury were vanished for that morning, rose to depart, one of them saying to the other, "I believe there is some mistake :—this is not the lady I came to visit; and I can have no business here! Was not that it? He!"

"Yes, the words; but to do justice to the look and the manner, you must have the beauty and the innocence of Lady Shirley."

"Shall I give you an arm, my funny one?" he added to Mrs. Somerley, in a tone very different from that in which he had mentioned Catherine; and Mrs. Somerley taking his arm begged him to see her home, while she left Miss Newbury to feel and lament with bitter tears the mortifications to which her frailty had exposed her.

To her lord, and to him only, Catherine related to what her credulity had exposed her; and by candidly blaming  
 VOL. II. P herself

herself for taking such a step without his leave, she tried to divert some of his anger from Mrs. Somerley. But that was impossible; especially as the note from Lady Vortex was delivered by mistake to him, and her conduct thereby disclosed in all its odious light.

Immediately, in spite of Catherine's entreaties, he inclosed the note in a cover to Mrs. Somerley, in the inside of which he wrote as follows:—

“Lord and Lady Shirley conclude it is unnecessary to inform Mrs. Somerley that, after what passed this morning, and the perusal of the inclosed, they cannot have the honour to attend Mrs. Somerley's assembly this evening.”

This, though an expected, was an unwelcome blow: as Lady Shirley was the lion of the day, and Mrs. Somerley had taken care to hint, in order to attract company, that the fair countess had promised

mised to sing during the course of the evening."

"Well," said she to herself, "war is now, however, declared between us ;—the sword is drawn, and I will throw away the scabbard. So look to yourself, Lord Shirley ; I will tease you well whenever I have an opportunity."

A short time after Lucy Merle's departure, Catherine (who was rendered occasionally indisposed by her situation) drove some miles into the country one morning, in order to breathe fresher air than London afforded : as she returned the horses took fright, the coachman was thrown off his box, and the unruly animals ran violently forward towards a turnpike gate, which the turnpike-man had the wisdom to close. It so happened that Melvyn, who was walking, saw what was passing ; and recognising the liveries, ran forward through the gate before it was closed, and seizing the

horses appeared to stop them, though in reality they were stopped by the gate. He was, however, really instrumental in preventing the carriage from being overturned, by assisting in holding it up while it was taken off the post over which the horses had drawn it. When he opened the carriage he found Lady Shirley in a state of great alarm, and scarcely able to articulate her thanks to Melvyn for having, as she thought, saved her from destruction.

Melvyn knew that, whatever secret pleasure he felt in having thus seemingly conferred so great an obligation on Lord and Lady Shirley, he must confine the expression of it within proper bounds. He therefore replied almost coldly to Lady Shirley's thanks, while he staid with her in a shop till the servants returned with Lord Shirley's carriage and horses, as the coachman had not dared to proceed with her own.



own. But when they arrived, he begged to be allowed to see her safe home. This offer she refused; assuring him she was quite well, and that the effects even of her alarm were going off. Melvyn, however, followed the carriage as fast as possible; and as it was stopped near Hyde Park by other carriages, he had time to overtake it entirely, though he kept out of sight; and as the coachman went into the Drive, Melvyn was able to reach Grosvenor Square as soon as Lady Shirley did: and when she stopped at her own door the first person whom she saw was Melvyn.

Lord Shirley was at this moment entering the square, and with no small surprise beheld Catherine not only handed out of her carriage by Melvyn, but actually leaning on his arm as she walked up the steps, where she seemed to take a  
most

most animated and even affectionate leave of him, while he with his hand pressed to his heart seemed to retire in great emotion.

He eagerly therefore hurried home to require an explanation of the scene ; and running up into the drawing-room, found Catherine on her knees and leaning on her clasped hands as they rested on the sofa. She started as he entered, and raising her head displayed a face covered with tears. At this sight Lord Shirley fancied,—for what cannot jealousy imagine ?—that these were tears of regret that she had not married the too insinuating Melvyn, and that she had been endeavouring by prayer to strengthen her heart against him ; while hastily advancing, he desired to know, in rather an unkind tone, why she was on her knees, and why she wept.

Surprised

Surprised and wounded Catherine rose, and with great effort replied, " I was only weeping out my thanks to my Creator."

" *Thanks !* for what ?"

" For my preservation." Here she could sustain herself no longer, but fell back in a fainting fit on the sofa, while the terrified earl rung and called violently for assistance.

" The servants, now, all speaking at once, related what had passed, their mistress's danger, and the courage of the gentleman who stopped the horses and also helped to prevent the carriage from overturning,—but his name they could not tell ; and the earl was a little relieved at not hearing that the gentleman was Melvyn.

At length Catherine recovered ; but  
was

was so ill that she begged to be carried to bed instantly, and to have her medical attendant sent for. He, when he came, desired she might be kept perfectly quiet for many hours, as he found her whole frame had undergone an alarming agitation. Lord Shirley therefore was forbidden to approach her, and was consequently unable to hear, what indeed he dreaded to hear—namely, that she owed her preservation to his rival. But even this fear was swallowed up in apprehension lest Catherine's health, if not her life, should be endangered by the accident. But at night she was permitted to sit up and see her lord, who was under no necessity of putting questions to her relative to her accident; for she was eager to relate to Lord Shirley every particular, and to try to make him repent of his past coldness towards Melvyn, by describing  
his

his courage in rescuing her from peril, and his modesty in disclaiming all merit in so doing.

“Melvyn ! Melvyn ! your preserver ?” cried the earl with a deep sigh. “Would it had been any one else !”

“Do you think my life, and that probably of your child, dearly purchased at the rate of being preserved by him ?”

Lord Shirley started, and felt shocked at this the first reproach that Catherine had ever uttered ; and clasping her tenderly to his breast, his emotion was for some time the only and the most satisfactory answer he could make to her question.

“I will answer your unkind query, my love,” said he at length, “not by words but actions. Compose yourself to sleep now, and tomorrow you shall have reason to *repent* your saucy doubt.”

But it was not without great effort that

Lord Shirley could prevail on himself to act towards Melvyn as he would have done towards another man on such an occasion ; nor could he put his resolution in practice, till, as soon as he had breakfasted, he had called the servants in, and again heard them declare that they believed their lady owed her life wholly to the brave stranger.

“ God for ever bless him and his for it !” added his panegyrist.

“ Enough,” said Lord Shirley ; and rushed out of the house ashamed of having been forced to have recourse to the gratitude of his servants in order to inflame his own. But the unworthy feeling was over, and the generous heart of Lord Shirley was all itself when he reached the house of Melvyn. As he knocked at the door, it was opened to let out Mr. — the surgeon, from whom he learnt that

Melvyn,

Melvyn, in stopping horses who were running away with a carriage, had sprained his arm and was in violent pain.

“That carriage was mine, and the lady saved, my wife,” cried Lord Shirley: “and I am come to thank her deliverer; but I hope he has not sustained any serious injury.”

“No—certainly not,” was Mr. ——’s answer, as he walked hastily away.

Lord Shirley then sent up his name, and was immediately admitted; while even Melvyn’s vindictive heart felt something like emotion at the idea of a visit from Lord Shirley.

The earl as soon as he entered threw himself upon his feelings; and while he held Melvyn’s hand in his, was for a few moments unable to speak; while Melvyn felt something of his hate subdued, as he saw the changed and grateful expression of Lord Shirley’s countenance, and beheld the

the glance of forbidding coldness replaced by a look of unnutterable benevolence.

At length the earl articulated, "Melvyn! I want words to thank you!—Such an obligation as you have conferred on me! You are a noble fellow, and you must let me prove by my respect and attention, how truly I appreciate you and your daring!—Do, pray, come and dine with us to-day! Lady Shirley, if well enough, will be delighted to thank her preserver!"

This was not said all at once, but with breaks occasioned by emotion: and Melvyn affected to feel a great deal too. But too proud and too wary to accept the first invitation to a house that had hitherto been shut against him, he declared himself engaged that day.

"Then come *to-morrow* or the *next* day." But he was still engaged:—and

Lord



Lord Shirley began to fear that he had by his past coldness offended Melvyn beyond forgiveness, and that he would not visit him. But there he was mistaken; for to visit at Lord Shirley's was for many reasons the first wish of his heart. And seeing that the earl looked mortified and vexed, he said, " But I believe I can put off my engagement for tomorrow, and if I can I will have the honour to wait on you." He then inquired how Lady Shirley was : and Lord Shirley left him, satisfied with Melvyn and with himself—for he had *conquered* himself—he had subdued his incipient hatred of a man who had not to the best of his knowledge offended him, and whose greatest crime in his eyes was his having dared to admire, and acknowledge that he admired, the woman whom he himself deemed worthy of universal admiration.

" How pleased Catherine will be,"  
thought

thought Lord Shirley, "when I tell her what I have done!" But he hoped at the same time she would not seem very *violently* delighted.

"My dearest lord," said Catherine, when she saw him, "I was so disappointed this morning to hear when I woke that you were gone out without seeing me!—I was hurt, indeed I was!"

"You would not have been so if you had known whither I was gone—no inducementless strong than that which I felt, would have made me go out without seeing you."

"Then whither have you been? Oh! I guess," she cried, clasping her hands in joy; "you have been to call on Mr. Melvyn! O my dear Shirley! how glad I am!" And, as she fondly embraced him, the earl thought he never could be uneasy again. "But how is he? How is Melvyn?" she resumed, "How does he look? Does his arm give him pain? I was very  
• uneasy.

uneasy to hear him complain of it yesterday."

"If you ask me three questions at once," replied Lord Shirley coolly, "how do you expect I can give you distinct replies?—Mr. Melvyn looks well, but his arm is painful, and he has called in Mr. —."

"Indeed!"

"Yes.—But you need not look so alarmed, for he has promised to dine here to-morrow."

"Has he? I hope I shall be well enough to sit at table!" And Lord Shirley tried to believe he hoped so too.

But she was not well enough to appear: and perhaps Lord Shirley received Melvyn, behaved to him, and did the honours of his table to his guests, much better than if Lady Shirley had been present. To Melvyn it had been a matter almost of indifference whether she appeared or not, as he had  
now

now got the *entrée* of the house; and already one of his companions had said to him, winking his eye, "Ah! Melvyn, you were always a lucky dog! I do believe you *bribed* those horses to run away! How much corn did you promise them? He!"

## CHAPTER XI.

THE evening of Lady Shirley's assembly at length arrived : and as it was her first party, every one that had been invited made a point of attending. Melvyn, of course, was now one of the invited guests ; but he did not arrive amongst the first of the party. The fine suite of rooms on the first floor was entirely thrown open for the reception of company, and the rooms below were opened for refreshments. The hall, the stair-case, and the wide balcony in front of the house, were full of the finest plants and flowers ; and white and crimson lamps mixed amongst the foliage, added to the general beauty and splendour of the scene. At an early hour the rooms were crowded ; and the last room in the suite, where the instruments

ments were, and where Lady Shirley and her musical acquaintance performed, became very soon so overpoweringly hot and full that the voices were heard to great disadvantage, and the singers sung with difficulty. Lady Shirley, therefore, when about to accompany herself in a simple ballad on the lute, chose to remove into the front room, in which there was at present a less unfavourable air.

Lord Shirley was at this moment in his own study, a room in the back part of the house, whither he had been summoned to receive some important directions relative to a motion which he was to make the next night in the House of Lords, and had been most reluctantly obliged to give up for a time the delight of hearing Catherine sing.

Lady Shirley fixed her chair rather near one of the windows; and after a very beautiful prelude she was beginning a  
soft

soft and plaintive air, when suddenly raising her eyes to the window, she was observed to start and turn very pale: then abruptly rising, she went to the window, on which now all eyes near her were fixed; and the company saw a man's face amidst the green foliage of the flowers, on which the light of the lamps shed a sort of ghastly hue. But as soon as Lady Shirley reached the window and bent towards the face, it disappeared; and pale and trembling she leaned against the side of the room.

“What a strange thing!” cried one.  
 “Who could it be?—No wonder your ladyship was frightened: surely it was a madman!—Well, I am surprised you dare go near him. But how could he get there?—But was it really a man's face?”  
 All these questions assailed Lady Shirley at once, while under no small consternation.

tion herself she was struggling for composure and for power to speak.

“ Yes, it was a man’s face, and a very formidable-looking one too, which I saw looking wildly at me as I began to sing ; and whoever the person was, you saw he disappeared directly. But we will interrogate the servants on the subject ; for how they could allow such a thing I cannot imagine.”

“ Dear me !” cried one ; “ what courage your ladyship has ! I own I should have died of the fright.” And the wondering and the exclamations had not ceased when Melvyn, followed by Lord Shirley, entered the room, and were both surrounded with persons eager to narrate the strange scene that had taken place.

Lady Shirley timidly raised her eyes to her lord’s, to see the effect of the relation on him ; and when they mentioned  
her



her turning very pale and seeming ready to faint, she saw him start, change colour, and look at her with a scrutinizing attention.

“This is very strange!” cried he. “What could the servants be doing to suffer a man to climb up to the balcony? And I wonder, Lady Shirley, instead of going to the window yourself, you did not send for one of the servants to seize him.”

“No doubt Lady Shirley knew what she was doing,” said Sophia Clermont in a low voice to a lady behind the earl: and the latter, as she intended, heard what she said.

“Well, have you told us all you know of this wonderful history?” said Melvyn with an expression of countenance Catherine did not like at all: “because, if you have, I will take it up where you left off; for I was below, and saw the beginning, progress, and end of this scene. In the  
first

first place, I must clear the servants of all blame ; for the crowd kept them off by force when they endeavoured to pull the fellow down as he was climbing : and when he had taken his station, much to the amusement of the populace, some of whom vainly endeavoured to follow his example, not having length or strength of limb sufficient for the purpose ; the servants dared not enter the room to seize him there, because they are always expressly forbidden never to come in when their lady is singing ; and as they thought, —which no doubt was the case,—that the poor man only meant to listen to the concord of sweet sounds, they acted quite right.”

While he spoke, he occasionally looked at Lady Shirley with great meaning, and not a variation of her tell-tale cheek was lost upon him ; nor indeed on her lord, who was going to speak, when

Melvyn

Melvyn stopped him, and said, "Stay, my lord, I have not yet done.—When this young giant let himself down again—"

"Young!" cried a lady. "He looked quite old, and seemed to have only one eye and a shaggy red wig."

"True, such was his dress and such his seeming appearance. But when he reached the ground, the mob, envying him perhaps an exaltation which they could not reach, seized and hustled him; and in the scuffle, which I hastened forward to prevent, they tore off his wig, his bandage, and his false mustachios; and he turned out to be one of the finest and handsomest, though fiercest-looking young men I ever saw."

"Indeed!" exclaimed one.

"Very mysterious!" cried another.

"*Very*," observed Miss Clermont in an emphatic tone not lost upon the earl: while Lady Shirley forced herself to ask what became of the poor creature.

"Oh!

“ Oh! I took him under my protection,” replied Melvyn, looking at her significantly. “ Your ladyship might be sure I would not suffer him to be ill-used, though I assure you the fellow was ready to knock me down for my interference: and telling me he hated to owe obligations to any one, he did knock down one after the other two men, who again assailed him: then running away with the swiftness of the antelope, disappeared in a moment.”

“ This is most strange!” said Lord Shirley. But Catherine, who knew it not to be as strange as it was distressing, said nothing. But when both a lady and gentleman thoughtlessly or maliciously observed, that no doubt this disguised listener was a rejected lover of Lady Shirley’s, Catherine turned on them a look of such severe displeasure and disdain, as no one could have thought her gentle countenance could have assumed.

“ But

“ But the song, do not let us lose the song !” cried several voices at once. And Lady Shirley, though conscious her nerves were much unstrung by what had passed, resumed her seat and her lute, but turned her back on the window, for she declared that the idea of seeing the face again would render her unable to sing a note.

“ The face had better *not* appear there again,” said Lord Shirley.

“ I think so too,” said Miss Clermont drily.

Lady Shirley sighed but spoke not, and immediately began her song. The firm full tones of her voice were gone, but its sweetness and its pathos remained ; and Lord Shirley, though suspicious and displeased, and convinced more than ever that a secret and a mystery were attached to Catherine which she was anxious he should not penetrate, felt his

heart entirely softened in her favour by the powers of her song.

Lady Shirley now called on another lady to perform, and her request was attended to. But while she was crossing from one room to another, Melvyn drew near her, and, unobserved by Lord Shirley, whispered these words in her ear, "Fear not, I will not betray you!"

"Betray me, sir! I have nothing to betray," cried Catherine, starting from him and colouring with indignation.

"No! what, no secret that you wish should be kept from Lord Shirley! You cannot suppose I should not know that young man again; he is too handsome and too remarkable ever to be forgotten!"

Catherine said no more: but a deep sigh expressed to him the disquiet of her soul, and seemed to request his forbearance.

At

At length, to the great joy of Catherine, this evening, so fruitful in disquieting circumstances, was at an end ; and some of the company no doubt departed to later meetings, where " the man's face at the window " was commented upon according to the different tempers and disposition of the parties speaking : but even candour itself could not help allowing that the circumstance, accompanied by Melvyn's communications, bore a very mysterious appearance.

" Well, all I can say is, I am glad the thing did not happen in my balcony," said a lady not remarkable for the discretion of her conduct ; "*my* lord would not have taken it so well."

" I dare say not," replied another lady sarcastically ; " but Lady Shirley is a sort of privileged person."

" Yes—she is a reputed saint," re-

torted the other : “ but I do not know that she is therefore in reality better than other people.”

“ What does this mean ? ” asked the Duchess of C——. “ Is this foolish circumstance supposed at all to involve the question of whether Lady Shirley’s sanctity be real or assumed ?—I believe, ladies, we should all of us think ourselves very ill used, if our reputations were in any respect called in question, because a madman or any impudent fellow chose to climb into our balcony to hear fine music : for what could Lady Shirley have in common with a person of this description ? ”

“ Aye, that’s the question ! But Lady Shirley did not always move in high life.”

“ No—but her mind was always above her situation ; and I am convinced no situation, no association however low, could have degraded or contaminated the  
mind,



mind, heart, or manners of Catherine Shirley."

"O dear ! I am sure we admire Lady Shirley as much as Your Grace does," replied one of the auditors—"still I see no reason why, if Lady Shirley seems to be involved in any mysterious circumstances, she should not be animadverted upon like other people."

"Nor I, madam : but it is the comments and the commentators alone that, in my opinion, make this circumstance mysterious."

The ladies said no more ; for the duchess was so much the ton, and her parties so first-rate, that they did not like to offend her ; and they saw that she resented any insinuation to the disadvantage of her friend.

But the duchess spoke as she thought ; and it was her evidently unstudied and natural comments on the circumstance,  
that

that quieted Lord Shirley's mind so far as to forbid his putting any questions to Catherine on the subject, likely to betray what he knew she would consider in him as degrading suspicions. But he was not always so fortunate as to hear only such comments as those of the friendly duchess. He sometimes called on Sophia Clermont ; and now that he felt by her tone of voice, when commenting on the odd scene at his house, that she imputed to Lady Shirley some private knowledge of the cause of it, he was anxious to call on her as soon as he could, though from respect for his wife he never once thought of mentioning to Sophia what he had overheard. And Sophia herself was always very guarded in all she said of Lady Shirley.

Mrs. Somerley, who had never forgiven Catherine's spirited resentment of the trick which she had played her, was unfortunately

ly

ly with Sophia when the earl called on her the day after Catherine's assembly ; and as she had no reason for sparing Lady Shirley's fame or Lord Shirley's feelings, she began commenting on what had passed, as freely as if he had not been present. Perhaps not even pretensions to excelling wit excite so much ill-will and detraction, as pretensions to excelling piety and virtue ; for the claims of any one to wit are, after all, dependent on the opinions of others ; but the actual practice of religion and all the active duties which it enjoins, are things that admit of proof ; and the only resource in such cases is to impute to the actors an hypocritical desire of the praises of man, not an operating love of God ; and also to attribute to them in secret the commission of crimes and sins which more than counterbalance their apparent sanctity of life. No wonder, therefore, that poor Catherine was

now

now the theme of invidious wonder and implied censure.

“ So, my lord,” said Mrs. Somerley to Lord Shirley, “ you had quite an adventure at your house the other night. Lady Shirley is a lucky woman to have had her first assembly signalized by such a romantic scene. It will make her parties quite the rage—something so novel and *piquant*—almost as good as the circumstance that made old Lady Champernown’s parties the ton again, after they had been long deserted.”

“ And what circumstance was that, madam ?”

“ Oh ! at a ball she gave, a good gentleman was so obliging as to fall down dead in the dance ; and you have no notion how crowded her parties were the whole winter after. It was such a fine rouse, such a fine excitement to the feelings, you know.”

“ I sin-

“I sincerely hope,” replied Lord Shirley warmly, “that Lady Shirley’s parties will be deserted for ever, if they are to be peopled only by such awful events as that which you have described.”

“Nay, my lord, a madman, or a disguised lover, looking in at the balcony window up which he climbed on purpose, is surely as interesting, and certainly a more romantic event than a fit of apoplexy.”

“For shame, Mrs. Somerley! what a licence you give your tongue!” said Sophia, seeing Lord Shirley was so painfully agitated to speak. “What ground has any one for supposing that Lady Shirley could have a lover—much less a disguised one? and if she has rejected lovers, they must respect her too much to venture an indiscretion, and a daring act like the one in question.”

This speech instead of quieting irritated the earl’s feelings still more; for he con-

trasted its candour, and the high opinion which it expressed of Catherine, with her observations, not intended as he believed for his ear, and the tone with which she had uttered at his house the little word "very."

"So then," observed Lord Shirley at last, "this poor vulgar fellow in my balcony is converted into a disguised lover, is he?"

"Surely, Lord Shirley, this is not to be wondered at. Did not Melvyn describe him as a beautiful youth when his wig was off? and though I dare say he was jealous to phrensy and wished to poison him, was it not evident that Melvyn seemed to make a merit to Lady Shirley of his having made a point of protecting him? And could not any one who had eyes, see during the remainder of the evening that there was a great deal of whispering and meaning, conscious looks, and so forth, between

between them? At least, so certain shrewd observers have told me."

Though Lord Shirley fancied he had seen all this himself, and was thereby at the time rendered very suspicious, he could not bear that this bold gossiping woman should know that others had observed the same. But while he was trying to find words to express his resentment as mildly as possible, Sophia, well knowing that he could not fail to see that out of tenderness to him she spoke against her real opinion in taking Lady Shirley's part, gently but forcibly reproved her friend for always putting the harshest construction on every thing; and wondering that, as the heroine of the tale was Lady Shirley, she was not assured at once that there could have been no ground for suspicion.

"Oh! my dear, you know, with all due respect to Lord Shirley, I have not that devoted

devoted reverence and love which your generous heart feels for Lady Shirley. I know that you swear by her, and think the world never saw such a woman."

"Does Miss Clermont think so, madam?" asked Lord Shirley, looking with great kindness on Sophia: "then she thinks with that justice and liberality which might be expected from a mind like hers." But recollecting how ill this representation agreed with what he had heard the night before, he added, "And I hope she never sees more than a transient reason for thinking otherwise."

"Certainly not," replied Sophia blushing, because she understood him. "Whatever suspicion may momentarily attach to such a woman as Lady Shirley, it must fall to the ground, because it has nothing to cling to. Can any one in their senses suppose that a woman who not only is pious, but has the courage to avow that she is so,  
and



and who has resolution enough to go counter to the usual habits of fashionable life, because she thinks them wrong, and by that means exposes herself to be thought righteous over much,—could possibly have a mysterious visitor or acquaintance unknown to her husband, and have a secret understanding with a Mr. Melvyn, in which her husband was no partaker?—Impossible ! for, if it were so, then must Lady Shirley be a hypocrite, and the worst of hypocrites ; because she would be taking advantage of the very high character which she bears, to allow herself more license than women of lower pretensions to virtue dare take.”

“ True, very true,” said Lord Shirley sighing.

“ You and I, Sophia,” replied Mrs. Somerley, “ draw opposite conclusions from the same premises ; for I am inclined to believe that persons who say many prayers,

prayers, and are so very strict in self-denials, must be conscious that they have more secret faults to atone for, and more tendency to evil to guard against, than their less rigid neighbours.—Oh, *à-propos!*” she added before Lord Shirley could utter the angry reply rising to his lips: “A friend of mine was so amused last Sunday evening,—perhaps I ought to say *edified*,—while waiting for his carriage in a house opposite yours, my lord; for, happening to look into your drawing-room, he saw, while we sinners, and you amongst the rest, were going from party to party, and driving ourselves and our servants to perdition; he saw, I say, the young and holy Lady Shirley with a large book (a Bible no doubt) open before her, reading aloud to the general her grandfather!”

“Indeed! madam,” said the earl; “and your friend was amused at the sight, was he?”

he? though I own to you, I think *edified* was a better word, as I see nothing amusing or laughable, but something very proper and very natural in a granddaughter reading the Bible on a Sunday evening to her grandfather; and all I am ashamed of is, my own bad taste in having hitherto forborne to make the third in so interesting a group."

"I would advise you, my lord, to have the countess painted reading her Bible, as Rembrandt's mother is painted; and make a present of it to the Bible Society."

"I thank you for the first hint, and shall certainly adopt it; and have the general and Lady Shirley both in one piece; aye, and myself too."

"You had better be painted at once as a Holy Family, Lord Shirley. When the little bambino comes, the countess would make a lovely Madonna; and you, as you  
are

are too young and handsome for Joseph, would do very well for the Angel, and the general for Joseph: but I doubt whether aunt Delaney would like to sit either for Anna or Elizabeth. — But how I run on! Pray, my lord, do not tell Lady Shirley my scheme for a Holy Family.”

“No, madam; I dare not, lest she should scold me for keeping such company.” Then with a hasty bow he left the room.—He however derived some good from Mrs. Somerley’s impertinence. He saw that by going to parties himself on a Sunday evening he deprived his wife of his support and sanction to her conduct, and that he left her exposed to ridicule from which his presence at home would save her. He therefore resolved to be of the reading party: and when on the following Sunday, instead of  
going

going to Lady S——'s Sunday assembly or Lady ——'s music, he presented himself as an auditor to Lady Shirley's reading, Catherine welcomed him almost with tearful joy : and when he declared his intention of always passing his Sunday evenings in that manner in future, she assured him that this alone had been wanting to her felicity, and that now her felicity was complete.

“ Can this woman be a hypocrite ? ” thought Lord Shirley. “ Impossible ! ”

Lord Shirley was really in earnest concerning the picture, and had it begun immediately by a celebrated artist, intending it should be finished after Lady Shirley's confinement, and appear in the next Exhibition. Accordingly Lady Shirley sat regularly till she was unable to leave home ; and the picture therefore was in great forwardness when she became  
the

the happy mother of twins—a boy and a girl: and all Lord Shirley's fears and anxieties concerning the mysterious secret were forgotten in the new delights of a parent.

## CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Lady Shirley was entirely recovered the picture was resumed, and it was soon ready to send to Somerset House: and the figures being as well grouped as they were well executed, and being all three striking likenesses, it was thought one of the best pieces of the master.

The seclusion in which Lord and Lady Shirley had lately lived had prevented the former almost from recollecting either his suspicions relative to the man in the balcony, and Catherine's secret, or his jealousy of Melvyn; but the latter returned the very first moment he saw Melvyn with Catherine. Mrs. Somerley was right, he found: there did seem a secret understanding between them, an intimacy for which

which he could not account.—He saw Melvyn, at a party at Miss Clermont's, approach Catherine and speak in a low voice to her. He saw her start and change colour, and eagerly reply. He then saw her walk with him into the next room where there were fewer people, and sit down by him on a sofa. He also saw that their conversation was of so interesting a nature that Catherine seemed unconscious of the presence of any one ; but that on looking up and seeing him draw near her, she broke off abruptly what she was saying ; and looking confused, took the arm of a lady near her, and forced conversation with her. But before the evening closed he saw her go in search of Melvyn, and again enter into conversation apart with him.—Lady Shirley had just begged her lord to go and see for the carriage, and he now thought she had done it to get rid of his watchful eye. But he  
was



was more eager to remove her from her dangerous companion, than she, he thought, would be eager to go ; and accordingly he went in search of his servants, one of whom told him his carriage could not draw up, because a carriage stopped the way, which had been vainly called several times, and yet would not drive off.

“ Whose carriage is it ? ” asked Lord Shirley.

“ Mr.— Mr.— dear me, I forget the name ; and yet I have spoke it often enough ; for it is a gentleman who called two or three times on my lady and the general last week, when you, my lord, were gone to your regiment.”

“ Do you mean Mr. Melvyn ? ”

“ Yes, yes ; that’s the name.” And at this moment Melvyn’s footman asked Lord Shirley whether his master was not coming.

A “ Con-

A "Confound your master!" nearly escaped the lips of Lord Shirley: but recollecting himself, he said he would go and let his master know that his carriage stopped the way. He then returned to the rooms: but seeing Melvyn still talking to Lady Shirley, who seemed, he thought, to listen to him with delighted attention, he dared not trust himself to speak to him; but begged a gentleman near him to let Mr. Melvyn know his carriage had stopped the way some time. And Melvyn, with a significant bend of the head to Catherine, which she as significantly returned, reluctantly took his leave and departed.

"You seem very intimate with Mr. Melvyn," said Lord Shirley as calmly as he could to Catherine as he drove home: "really your intimacy almost amounts to a flirtation."

"Flirtation! that word makes me  
smile

smile when applied to me; for you know I am no flirt."

"Therefore your singling out one man to talk to apart is the more striking, and likely to occasion remarks."

"That is very true, my dear lord," replied Catherine; "and if I can help it I will never do it again."

"If you can help it, Catherine!"

"Yes; for really I must own Mr. Melvyn's conversation is sometimes interesting to me." And she sighed as she ended her sentence.

Lord Shirley dared not trust himself to continue the conversation, for all his worst fears seemed confirmed; and he again believed that Catherine, unknown perhaps to herself, had always felt for him that liking of which love is compounded, and that now his conversation was become necessary to her happiness.

The

The next day Sophia Clermont said to him, well knowing the effect she would produce, "You never told me Lady Shirley was a fine harp-player; but I have heard such raptures about her playing, and the beauty of her figure while playing!"

"Impossible! Lady Shirley never plays to any one but me, because her father thought the harp exhibited the person too much; and as both he and Catherine and I entertain the same opinion, I am sure no one has described to you her harp-playing from having heard it;—at least no *man* can have so described it."

"No man but Melvyn; and Lady Shirley has played to *him*."

On hearing this, Lord Shirley started from his seat pale and speechless with indignation.

"It is false! it must be false!" cried he; "and Melvyn is a liar and a boaster."

"He

“He may be both,” replied Sophia calmly, and in her heart enjoying to see Lord Shirley suffering those jealous pangs which he had inflicted on her;—“but I assure you this is what he told me: I ought to add, however, that he enjoined me secrecy, as Lady Shirley desired him not to mention that she had played to him: but I could not think it was not to be known to you.”

“Plays to him! and enjoins him to be secret!—This is worse and worse,” cried Lord Shirley; “and I cannot believe it.”

“Why not? You know she favours him more than any other man, talks to him more, distinguishes him more.”

“Distinguishes him indeed! if she displays her fine figure to him at that instrument.—But I will know whether this be true or not directly,” he added, snatching up his hat.

“And how, my lord?”

“How? By asking Catherine herself.”

Sophia put up her lip disdainfully, and smiled as if in derision.

“You may sneer, madam; but I will trust the tongue that never yet told me, or any one else, a voluntary falsehood.”

“Very confiding, indeed! But if, which I now do not credit, Lady Shirley was induced from vanity or a tenderer feeling thus to indulge Mr. Melvyn, would not this argue such a dereliction from principle, as to make the necessary lie to screen her error an easy effort to her?”

Lord Shirley felt the force of what she said; and without trusting his voice to speak, ran down stairs, and directed his hurried steps to his own house. Some time before he reached the door, he saw Melvyn leaving it; and this sight added to his perturbation. As soon as the door was opened to him, he ran up into the drawing-room, but Lady Shirley was  
not

not there; he then proceeded into her own dressing-room, where stood her harp, and by it Catherine herself looking over some harp music.

“ So, madam,” said Lord Shirley, almost breathless with emotion, “ Mr. Melvyn has been here; and I suppose you have been playing the harp to him ! ”

Catherine looked up, and smiling incredulously said, “ No, no; you cannot really suppose that—you know better, my dear lord.”

“ Answer me: No evasion. Did Melvyn or did he not ever hear and see you play the harp ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Catherine blushing, “ he has done both.”

“ Then he shall never do either again.” And seizing the harp, he dashed it on the floor.

Unnumbered feelings of varied degrees of agony now tinted with their different

hues the cheek of Lady Shirley ; but its paleness alone at last remained, while she sat in silent contemplation of her angry lord, and waiting to learn the cause of violence so unusual. That violence subdued itself ; and in a broken faltering tone her wretched husband, ashamed of the degradation in her eyes to which the indulgence of his passion had exposed him, besought her to forgive him what he could not forgive himself.

“ What *have* I to forgive ? ” said Catherine. “ Not the injury to my harp, for that must be an *effect*—it is the cause of that effect that I must have to forgive, and what was it ? ”

“ Can you *ask*, when I heard you own that you had allowed Melvyn to see you play the harp ? ”

“ I *could* not say so, because I did not allow him. But one evening when I was last at Hampton, and that the heat of the  
weather



weather had forced me to open the curtains as well as windows, Mr. Melvyn was passing the back of our house on foot; and hearing music and seeing a light, he leaped the pales and came up to the window. I was at my harp; and wholly unconscious that I was either heard or seen, I played and sung a considerable time, till my grandfather called me to him, fearing that the air was growing too chill; and Mr. Melvyn without discovering himself went away. The next morning he called, and told me of what he styled his *happy daring*."

"Wretch!" muttered Lord Shirley.  
 "Well, and did you enjoin him secrecy?"

"I *did*. I said that though hurt and *provoked* at what he told me, I would not resent his presumption, because he was not aware of the aversion I had to be seen at my harp; and that to avoid importunity to do what I never would do, that is, play

to

to any one, I wished it not to be known that I was able to play : therefore I desired he would never tell any one that he had heard me, though it was merely by accident. He promised compliance, and left me."

" Yes—and well did he *keep* his word, for he has told Miss Clermont, under a promise of secrecy indeed; and she thinking I was in the secret imparted it to *me*, and with what feelings I heard it I need not describe to you.—But why did you not tell me this as soon as it happened?"

" Because I knew you would be as much hurt as I was at Melvyn's having seen me play; and to say the truth, the circumstance was so disagreeable to me that I wished to forget it as fast as possible.—Are you satisfied now?"

" Satisfied! Yes—but so ashamed! and so angry both with Melvyn and myself! He, you see, concealed the most important

portant part of the truth—that he heard you by accident.”

“How do you know that? Miss Clermont might hear and relate inaccurately—a far more likely circumstance than that Mr. Melvyn should be guilty of so unprincipled a misrepresentation.”

“You seem to think very *highly* of this man.”

“I do;—but not so highly but that you are welcome to know every thought of my heart towards him.”

“Indeed! Well I must and do believe you.—But then, O Catherine, how can I ever forgive myself? I am ashamed to look at your harp.”

“I hope it is not much hurt, for it was my father’s present,” said Catherine, tears forcing themselves down her cheeks.

Lord Shirley was affected even to agony. But scenes of repentant and forgiving fondness it is better to imagine than

than to describe. Suffice, that as soon as they had recovered from their agitation, Lord Shirley declared that he would go back to Miss Clermont, and explain the state of the case to her.

Sophia knew very well already what he had to communicate; and biting her lips and looking down, she received what he said with nothing but a significant “Oh, that’s the case, is it? I conclude that I heard inaccuratey;—certainly that is more likely than that Melvyn should wilfully misrepresent, or Lady Shirley do wrong.—But come, let us talk of something else.”

“No, madam, no; for *I* can talk only of that which is uppermost in my thoughts; and I must own that your manner does not satisfy me, because you do not seem satisfied yourself.”

“To be honest, my lord, I cannot see any force in Lady Shirley’s reasons for  
not

not telling you of Melvyn's having seen her at her harp unknown to herself; and as her heart seems to have been so oppressed by the consciousness, I wonder that she did not reveal it to you, by way of lightening her mind, as soon as she saw you.—My lord, I do not like mystery or concealment between married people or even lovers, for where there is much reserve there is little love; and if a wife made a friend the sharer in a secret which she kept from her husband, I should instantly believe the friend more near her heart than her husband himself.—Oh! how differently do *I* feel on such subjects! and how differently should I act! To my husband I should impart even every trifle that interested me; not in order to prove my confidence in him, but because I could not help associating him and his idea in every thing which I did, thought, or felt.”

Lord Shirley sighed, but did not reply, for he was sure that Catherine's practice was very different.

Sophia, though Lord Shirley did not speak, saw that her words sunk deep into his heart ; and by his subsequent gloom and abstraction she felt that she had given his confidence in Catherine, or at least in her affection for him, a home stroke.— Soon after, Lord Shirley rose, pressed her hand with some fervour, and withdrew.

Melvyn in the meanwhile was not idle in his plans for ruining the fame and destroying the wedded happiness of the man whom he hated, by convincing him that his wife was an adulteress.

Catherine, who in every respect endeavoured to live up to the precepts of the Gospel, when she gave alms, conformed as much as was in her power to the injunction of not “letting her left hand know what her right hand did.” And  
 having

having once by accident been acquainted with the wretched state of a poor deserving family in an obscure street in her neighbourhood, she had become the ministering angel of all the families residing in the same staircase: but in order that her interference should be secret, it was her custom as soon as her lord was gone out to ride before breakfast,—a custom ordered him by his physicians for a bad head-ache,—to put on a thick white veil, and go unattended to the garrets in question.

One morning as she was going on this charitable errand, Melvyn returning from a ball saw her cross the square, and followed her, not knowing at first who it was, but thinking her a very fine woman. He soon however, from her height and commanding air, recognised Lady Shirley, and resolved to watch and see whither she went. He did so, and walked up

up and down the street, still however keeping out of her sight till she returned, and without looking to the right or left proceeded towards her own house. Melvyn immediately entered where she had entered; and knocking at the first door, it was opened to him by a well-known face—a woman who, when in the prime of her youth and beauty, had been for some time under his protection. This woman, in reply to some of his questions relative to a young lady who had just quitted that place, said that the lady came there very often, and she believed that she was a good lady enough, but very partial; for she did not give her as much as she gave others in the staircase, though to be sure she rarely came without giving her something, indeed more than she asked for, for she had given her a Testament and had bidden her read it.

Melvyn saw therefore that in this offend-  
ed.



ed woman he should have a ready agent for any thing he wished, and he took care to give her money enough to satisfy her avarice.

“But tell me,” said he, “does this lady relieve and support all the poor on this floor and the next?”

“Almost, and on the one above too; and she reads the Bible to them sometimes if they wish it.”

“So then she has left nothing for me to do, but read the Bible to you, Charlotte,” said Melvyn laughing.

“Nay, sir, I do not think that much in *your* way,” replied Charlotte.

“You are mistaken, child,” answered he. “But are you sure that there are no poor here but what she visits?”

“I recollect there is one family on the next floor to this, that she has not thought poor and helpless enough to require regular aid. But I find that the family is now  
bed-

bed-ridden with the rheumatism and ague, and one of the children is very bad too ; therefore no doubt when she comes hither again they will apply to her."

"No, they shall not, for I will be their physician and priest myself : so lead the way to their room, Charlotte."

She did so ; and Melvyn saw a scene that made him inclined to be charitable even for charity's sake. But it was a scene of distress which money could relieve, if not as yet remove ; and he had much to give. Then having made them promise not to apply to the good lady, as he would give them all they could possibly want, he promised to see them again soon, and departed.

The next morning he watched Catherine from her house, and saw her take the same direction as the day before ; and being sure whither she was going, he stole down another street which led to the same place ;

place; and before she reached it he was sitting by the bed-side of his new acquaintance, and saw her enter (the door being a-jar) the room of the poor people opposite. Soon after he heard her reading a chapter in the Bible to them, and explaining to them their hopes of salvation and the foundation of that hope. But Melvyn did not choose to discover himself yet—he therefore gave his *protégés* more money; and having promised, if they liked it, to read the Bible to them the next time he came, he stole down stairs unperceived by Catherine.

As some of these poor were very old and ill, and expressed themselves soothed and cheered by Lady Shirley's assistance, she made a point of visiting them regularly every day: therefore Melvyn was always sure of finding her at her post; and at length he chose that she should see him at his. Accordingly, one day he left

left his invalids, gently shutting the door after him, just as Catherine had entered the opposite room and was looking towards him. He did not seem to see her, but hastily ran down stairs with his handkerchief towards his face.

“How strange!” thought Catherine. “Surely that was Melvyn! and does *he* visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction?” “And why not?” whispered her conscience, reproving her for the pharisaical spirit she evinced in thinking him less likely to do good than herself. However, she resolved to know why she saw him at such an unusual place, especially as her being liable to meet him might make it necessary for her to forgo such frequent visits there.

She therefore, as soon as her business with her own poor was finished, knocked at the door of the opposite room; and, being admitted, inquired into the state of  
their

their health, and so forth. They all eagerly assured her, that, though very ill, they were no longer poor, as a kind good gentleman had come to see them twice, and had given them food and money for all their wants—advice, and all.

“And is he to come again?”

“O yes.”

“Well, don't mention having seen me to him,” said Catherine; and saying she was glad that they had found such a friend, she departed, gratified to see that even men of the world were better than she could have expected.

“And surely,” thought Catherine, “if I take care that he never sees me, I may continue my visits as usual.” And she did continue them for at least three days without seeing Melvyn, as he was afraid that seeing him often might frighten her away; and he wished it to appear, when inquiry should

should be made, that they had very frequently been there at the same time. On the fourth morning, however, he resolved to be seen: therefore, begging that the door might be opened for air, he began reading a chapter in the Bible aloud to the poor man who was ill in bed, and he sat with his profile towards the door; so that Catherine, as she left the opposite room, could not fail of seeing and of being seen. The wife and the children immediately rose, and curtsied to her. This obliged Melvyn, of course, to turn his head; and exclaiming in a tone of astonishment "Lady Shirley!" he was going to rise, when she prevented him, and desired him to go on with his benevolent office. This was almost too much even for his hypocrisy, especially as he knew that Charlotte was grinning opposite him: he did, however, proceed; and as he read

well

well habitually, Catherine was not aware how little his feelings had to do in his excellence.

“ Little did I ever think that I should meet you here,” said Catherine, blushing and smiling ; “ but I must say, my good friend, this meeting will add greatly to the interest with which I meet you in the world.” She then ran down stairs.

However, though she walked fast, Melvyn was soon by her side. But Lady Shirley, aware how improper it was for her to be seen alone with Melvyn, was going to beg him to leave her, when her caution was rendered vain by the previous artifice of Melvyn, as, in order to take the chance of accidental circumstances, he had appointed two gentlemen to take him up in his own barouche at his stable-keeper’s ; and they met him and Catherine just as they entered the street where the man lived.

“ Holla !

“Holla! Melvyn! holla! Come, get in,” cried one: “but perhaps you are better engaged, and will not go now,” staring at Catherine, who doubled her veil over her face, and walked rapidly on, while Melvyn pulled off his hat and said “Good morning!”

“Lady Shirley, I am sure!” cried the other.

“Say that at your peril!” cried Melvyn, pretending anger.

“I may not *say* it, but I will prove it for my own satisfaction,” he replied, jumping out of the barouche, and following Catherine at a distance; Melvyn in vain having attempted to hold him, or pretended to attempt to hold him. When Catherine reached her own door, her watchful follower, having seen enough to convince him that the person who entered could be only the mistress of the mansion, returned back in triumph.

“I told



"I told you so—I knew it was she : for I saw her go in."

"That proves nothing--for it might be her abigail."

"No—servants do not open *both* sides of the folding-door to admit a lady's maid ; and this lady went in as soon as the door opened, and both doors were opened by two servants."

"I see you are incorrigible," said Melvyn ; "and the more I deny, I only make you believe the more : yet reflect how *improbable* it is that such a woman as Lady Shirley should walk with me in the street before nine o'clock—nay, how *impossible* it is !"

"Not at all : you are an insinuating fellow, Melvyn ; and it is said that the greatest saints are the greatest sinners."

Melvyn, on this, thought proper to put himself in a passion, and to declare that, if they would not promise to drop this  
subject

subject entirely, he would not go any further with them on their projected tour.

Catherine in the meanwhile was uneasy at having been seen in the street alone with Melvyn at so early an hour ; and resolved that she would tell her lord all that had passed, to guard against very probable and dangerous misrepresentations. But Lord Shirley was so much engaged in parliamentary business, that she rarely saw him when she could have spoken to him ; and when he came home full of smiles and tenderness to her to be soothed after his fatigues, she had not resolution to convert his smiles into frowns, and his tenderness into coldness, by any irritating communication.

“ No,” said Catherine, “ I go to our country-seat to-morrow, and when my dear lord follows me I will tell him all.”

At noon Lady Shirley set off for the  
country ;

country ; and the earl, on his way to the House of Lords, called on Sophia Clermont.—Sophia, who had her cue given her by Melvyn, had told Mrs. Somerley, who would, she knew, tell Lord Shirley, that Maitland and Sir Harry Turton had seen Lady Shirley walking alone with Melvyn before breakfast, and in an obscure street. On Mrs. Somerley's declaring that she should like to hear the tale from the men themselves, Sophia sent for them, and they related every particular ; while Sophia hypocritically entreated that, for the sake of poor dear Lady Shirley's fame and the peace of Lord Shirley, they would mention to no one else what they had seen.

They promised silence at the moment, probably out of envy of Melvyn, and because they were jealous of his supposed success. But Mrs. Somerley protested to Sophia, when alone with her, that having  
never

never forgiven Lord Shirley his conduct towards her, and certain rudenesses towards herself, nothing should prevent her telling him what was said and thought of his countess.—This was what the cunning Sophia expected and hoped for; and at this very moment of time Lord Shirley appeared.

“The very man!” cried Mrs. Somerley: “the very man we were talking of! Talk of——”

“Nay,” said Lord Shirley smiling; “do not let me have the mortification of hearing that vulgar musty proverb from the lips of a gentlewoman.”

“Severe, as usual!” replied Mrs. Somerley. “But pray, my lord, if you are so severe on others, how can you expect that others will spare you? Certainly, unless you bribe me very high, I must vent my spleen in telling every one of Lady Shirley’s walks before breakfast alone  
in

in the street with that charming fellow Melvyn."

"You are at liberty, madam," replied Lord Shirley, "to propagate the falsehood if you please; for I am sure that no one will believe it."

"It is no falsehood, my lord. Your friend Sophia there can tell you that it is a fact; and that she as well as I heard Maitland and Sir Harry Turton declare solemnly that they saw them twice."

"My dear Clara, how could you tell this, when I begged you not?"

"Then it is true: is it?" said Lord Shirley trembling in every limb.

"My lord, these gentlemen declared to me that they saw them; and in presence of Mrs. Somerley."

"Strange, indeed! What accident could throw them together?" said Lord

Shirley ; “ for they must have met by chance.”

“ Chance !—And do you really think so, my lord ? Oh ! no ; you do not.—And now, having made you as uneasy as I can at present, I will take my leave.”

So saying, she left him with Sophia.

“ What am I to think of all this ?” cried Lord Shirley when alone with her.

“ Oh, when you see Lady Shirley again, no doubt she will explain every thing to your satisfaction, as she did before.”

“ You speak sarcastically, madam.”

“ Do I, my lord ? Why should you think so ?—I merely stated a plain matter of fact.”

“ True ; but there is a way of stating plain matters of fact so as to insinuate that one does not think them so.”

“ Why, I must own, that if these things

things happened to any one but Lady Shirley, I should think that design must have been at work full as much as accident."

"And so should I. But the consummate purity of Lady Shirley—her innocence, such as I could not have conceived of——Why do you turn away, Miss Clermont, as if to hide a smile?"

"My lord, this is a subject I cannot and will not discuss with you. If Lady Shirley be the angel you think her, these aspersions on her fair fame will die away and be forgotten; but if these strange appearances be precursors of something more strange still, then I will listen to the tale of your wrongs and your miseries with patience and sympathy."

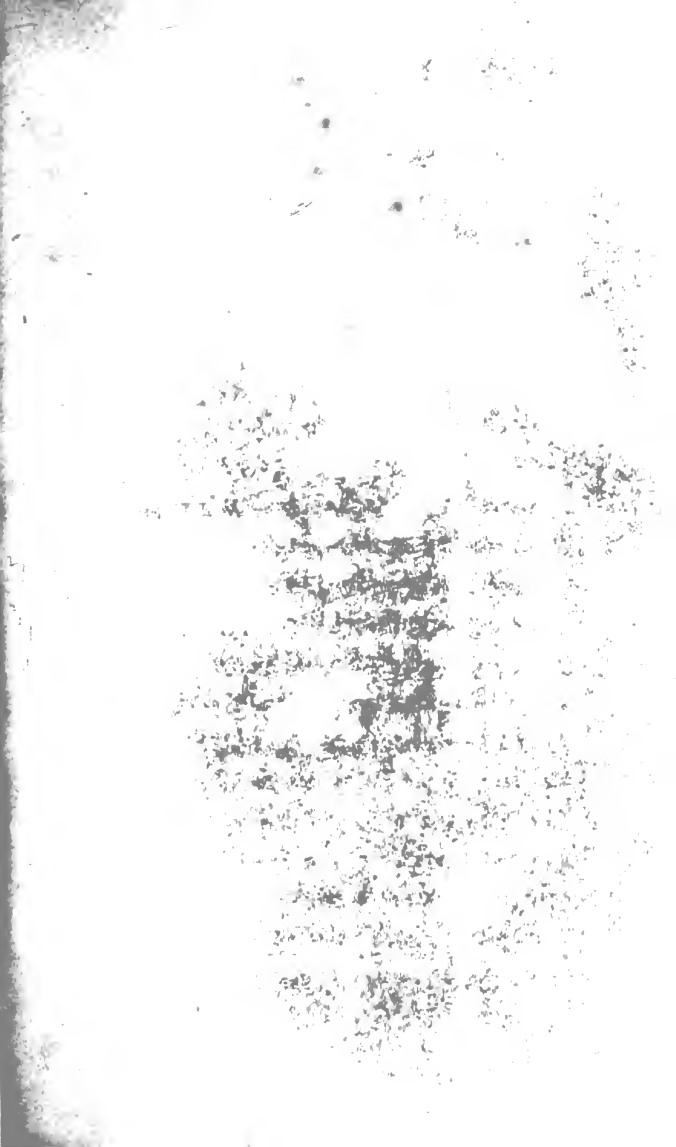
Lord Shirley did not reply; but telling her that he must go to the House of Lords on business, he bade her a hasty farewell.

"I find the arrow rankles in his heart,  
spite

spite of his efforts," said Sophia with a malignant smile when he was gone ; " and I am revenged ! ' Poor Sophia Clermont ! ' Shirley, as I was called on thy account, has found means to avenge herself, and a few days will, I trust, make my vengeance complete."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.









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